

*Grassroots*

PUBLIC RELATIONS

*for Agriculture*

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# *Grassroots* Public Relations *for Agriculture*

*by*

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National Cotton Council of America

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1950

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## P R E F A C E

This message is addressed to a relatively small group who have it within their power to preserve and protect basic Americanism . . . . the present and prospective officers of county and community farm organizations. It is addressed to the sons and daughters of wilderness carvers—to men and women who value individual dignity, freedom, and opportunity above the palliatives of regimented security and the promises of political planners.

These are the men and women in whose hands rests the future of us all. They are the last major remaining obstacle in the path of those who would lead America, piece by little piece and step by little step, into the economic twilight of a socialistic state.

The process these farm leaders are called on to fight is so subtle, and its selfish appeals are so misleading, that the average man in the street does not as yet realize how far it has progressed. He is not fully aware of the fact that already the executive branch of his government is dominated by an alliance of professional machine politicians and professional labor union bosses who are driving straight down the ruts made by their British counterparts. He has not sensed the full significance of a legislative balance so delicate that a switch of five seats in the Senate and fifteen in the House would mean for America the same stifling statism which has sapped the strength and self-respect of other nations throughout the world.

## PREFACE

It is not yet too late, however, for the farmer to save himself and render outstanding service to his countrymen. It is true, of course, that he is under attack—sometimes bitter attack. Metropolitan newspapers denounce him for every mistake a misguided politician makes on a farm bill. Officials of government attempt to split his legitimate organizations and substitute others they can control. Labor dictators try to woo away his weak members and intimidate the strong.

But the farmer is not licked. He represents, in fact, the major remaining segment of American citizenship which is both able and inclined to take leadership in changing the current trend. Labor could, but won't. Business would, but can't. Government wants more controls, more taxes, more employees, more "government." The white collar citizen is unorganized and inarticulate.

How successful the battle will be depends in large part upon how soon, how fast, and how vigorously the farmer moves. He has before him the opportunity, and the responsibility, for leading America's second, and perhaps its last, fight for independence.

It is for the purpose of contributing to his success in that fight that this message has been prepared. It is presented in the hope that it may be of practical assistance in helping to generate, at the nation's grassroots, an aggressive defense of brave homes and free lands.

—ED LIPSCOMB

Memphis, Tennessee  
February, 1950

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*“ ’Tis not the dying for a faith that’s so hard; ’tis the living up to it that is difficult.”—Thackeray*

## *Chapter I*

### P R O B L E M

Farmers built America. They cleared its wildernesses, conquered its savages, won its independence, created its form of government, and established a nation wherein men could exercise their initiative and expend their energy in expectation that their rewards would be in keeping with the volume and quality of their effort.

Through most of the nation's history, its farmers have been the most important single influence on basic public attitudes.

Gradually, however, the farmer's position has been undergoing fundamental changes — changes which have been tremendously speeded up by social and governmental developments of the past decade — changes which now offer him the alternative of either initiating an aggressive and heretofore unnecessary fight, or taking an unenviable and unaccustomed position well back from the front of the national parade.

#### THE FARMER'S NEW POSITION

There was a time in the early days of the nation when 90 per cent of all gainfully employed Americans were engaged in agriculture, when more than 90 per cent of the population lived on farms, and when a proportionate percentage of the national

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income was derived from agricultural production. Gradually, but with amazing steadiness, the statistical position of agriculture has declined until less than 16 per cent of gainfully employed workers are now in agriculture, less than 19 per cent of the population is on farms, and approximately 15 per cent of the national income is derived from farm products.

There was also a time, within the memory of many living Americans, when the average consumer was acutely conscious of the farm as his direct source of day-to-day sustenance. Most of his food was grown at home, or purchased direct from a nearby farmer, or bought from a small and friendly merchant who knew personally the farm sources of much of his goods.

Today's consumer thinks in terms of the supermarket and the chain store. He pays his money to a stranger, gets his vegetables frozen or in cans, selects meats processed on an assembly line, buys cereals in cellophane, and looks upon the entire procedure as a cold impersonal transaction between him and an automaton. Indeed, in many cases he virtually has come to take his food and clothes for granted, or to look upon them as obligations which society owes him—items he need worry little about while he devotes his major energies to the acquisition of automobiles and television sets. Certainly he has lost, to a considerable extent, his feeling of personal dependence on the farm and his immediate interest in the farmer.

Similarly, many communities which once thought primarily in terms of the farm now think almost

wholly in terms of the factory. Such communities compete for the payrolls of new industrial plants, pull rural labor off the land, bid up the wages of farm workers who are left, and in general demonstrate relatively less concern for agricultural progress than for industrial expansion.

Along with this numerical and economic superiority, the farmer once had a degree of individual independence which he is not likely, and certainly does not want, to see again. Not only did he grow his own food and supply his own fuel; he made his own soap, molded his own bullets, provided his own light, raised his own horsepower, and otherwise operated on a basis of self-containment which minimized his need for cash as a means to daily living.

Tractors, radios, electric bills, gasoline, and packaged groceries have struck at the farmer's self-sufficiency from two directions—they have forced him on the one hand to depend upon commercial suppliers for items of daily operation, and they have forced him on the other hand to seek commercial customers as a source of the cash his suppliers require. Under the pressure of such a financial pincers movement he has been moving from his former position of self-containment into one of growing dependence upon price, the public, and political enactments.

### TODAY'S FIGHT FOR PUBLIC FAVOR

Reduced numbers, lower percentage of national income, and increased economic dependence all endanger the farmer's historical position in national

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affairs. Yet by far the greatest threats to his influence are new. They consist of conscious and calculated programs being conducted by organized groups which are bidding fiercely for the moral and political support of the American public.

Labor unions scream and argue and threaten and beg for public support of more pay, less work, more pensions, and ever greater and more costly "benefits." Government generates fear, holds out hope, asks for faith, appeals to charity, and promises the impossible in order to gain public support for ever-expanding functions and ever higher appropriations. The nation's doctors, to defend themselves and their patients from incompetent political control, put their highest officials on the road to show the public that socialized medical care is physically and economically unhealthful.

The fundamental concept which motivates such efforts is wholly sound—that is, the concept that the group which wins the public wins its case. For public opinion, beyond question, is the sovereign power and the court of final appeal in a democracy such as ours. It puts political parties in and out of office, it makes and breaks men and industries, it determines what is good and what is bad, what is pretty and what is ugly, when a short skirt is stylish and when it is carnal, when vitamin pills are beneficial and when they are bunk.

Even before the development of pressure groups as we know them today, and well ahead of the invention of such opinion-influencing devices as radio and talking pictures, Abraham Lincoln summed it up in

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the statement, "Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed; consequently he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes."

There is no difference in the actual power of public opinion today and in the days of Lincoln. It is still true that governmental consideration of national economic questions is influenced as much by public attitudes and reactions as by arithmetic. It is still true that when the public is optimistic and confident, business and industry are inclined to take the risks of expansion; and when the public shows signs of fear and uncertainty, manufacturers and even retailers will trim their operations and cut their inventories regardless of any rose-colored figures which economists may parade before them.

There is a tremendous difference today, however, in the techniques through which public opinion can be influenced, and in the speed with which the public can be reached. Today the group with money and a message can talk to as many as 80 million listeners in their own homes simultaneously. Through print, picture, and sound, every normal American citizen in every state of the union can be reached with a speed that Lincoln would have found incomprehensible.

Unfortunately, modern speeds and techniques of communication frequently mean that unsound and undesirable ideas and causes may be so cleverly presented and so often repeated that they may win the support they seek. Similarly, a laudable move-

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ment, a worthy cause—or the needs of even so important a group as American farmers—may be disastrously neglected if the merits of the case are not impressed upon the public mind and successfully sold to the masses.

Certainly under today's social setup and political practices, a successful job of winning understanding and influencing the public has become the indispensable ingredient of any effective program involving the welfare of a major group. Hence it should be no surprise that the two groups which during the past decade have made the greatest progress in their efforts to win dominance of national life should be groups which have given top priority to the job of opinion molding.

### LABOR WANTS TO GOVERN

There are 77 percent more American workers who are dues-paying members of labor unions than there are total workers employed on American farms. Armed with such membership rolls, and with treasuries piled high, the nation's unions have announced in effect that they intend to take over Congress and see to it that the laws of the land are adjusted to conform to the ideas of union officialdom.

Included in the resulting legislative program are half a dozen matters of vital importance to agriculture—establishment of minimum agricultural wages and working conditions based on industrial standards without due regard to farm needs or long-established agricultural practices; repeal of any federal law which forces union officials to give to employers, or even to their own members, the pro-



tection and privileges they demand for themselves; the right to dictate who may and who may not be employed by firms holding union contracts; enactment of fantastically expensive so-called "public welfare" programs leading rapidly and directly to socialism; defeat of any and every Congressman and state official who fails to accept union dictation. It is a program which indicates that the Supreme Court was entirely right when it said, in its ruling upholding the National Labor Relations Act, that the union has only one prime purpose to serve—the promotion of its own interests.

### *Wooing the Public*

There is one way, and only one, in which such a program can succeed. That way is through the support, or at least the acquiescence, of a majority of the public. The quest for support in this case is not easy. Union appeals have so long been accompanied by political pressure, provocative propaganda, and obvious signs of selfishness that it is hard for the average citizen to believe that the interests of the general public are seriously considered.

The non-union public suspects, at least, that union leadership is seeking to interfere with the rights of private property and personal choice; and it is inclined to feel that individual freedom is just as much lost when it is lost to a labor organization as when it is lost to industrial monopoly or government regimentation. It has gained the impression in certain instances that the hearts of union officials sometimes bleed more copiously for their own pres-

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tige and power than for the welfare of the individual workman. The public has come to question the sincerity of national organizations which advise their local units, as Petrillo has recently done in his public relations handbook for musicians' unions, "*If you can do it without weakening your local's bargaining position, put your cards on the table.*"

To win over, circumvent, or crash through whatever opposition may exist, "big labor" today is conducting the most expensive and aggressive program of publicity and persuasion—outside of government—which the nation has ever seen. Behind that program are bulging union treasuries and tight organizational control of millions of workers. Behind it also is the benevolent encouragement of government's highest administrative officers—professional politicians who have joined professional labor leaders in an alliance aimed at mutual self-perpetuation in power.

### *Control of Men and Money*

Never before, outside of the nation's wartime armed forces, have so many Americans been subject to such discipline as union leaders now command. Almost 50 per cent of all employees in private business, and about two-thirds of all workers in manufacturing industries, are under union contracts. In some key industries—railroads, steel, automobiles, mining, building trades, etc.—the proportion of workers subject to assignment and assessment by union organizations runs from 80 per cent to almost 100 per cent. In 1948, the paying members of union

organizations totaled more than 15½ million, as compared with total agricultural employment of less than 9 million. The AFL led with more than 7 million members, the CIO ran a close second with approximately 6 million, and all other groups totaled 2½ million, including the independents, railroad brotherhoods, and the miners of John L. Lewis.

The seriousness of union determination to dominate American life was underscored by the AFL in 1949 when it appropriated \$750,000 as a kickoff fund for a pressure program "frankly aimed at giving United States labor the kind of control over Congress that the British unions wield over Parliament." \* The initial fund was provided to finance a coast-to-coast radio performance five nights each week to whoop up a more substantial money-raising campaign. The final campaign goal was \$2 per member from 7 million members, to be expended for political purposes in advance of the 1950 Congressional elections.

### *Control of Publicity Facilities*

Nearly one thousand labor newspapers and periodicals, with circulation of approximately 15 million, are keeping the unions' messages and propaganda in front of their memberships. This is approximately equivalent to the combined circulation of all of the nation's 10,000 weekly, semi-weekly, and tri-weekly newspapers in towns and cities under 50,000 population. Two syndicated services furnish news, pictures, and cartoons exclusively to labor publi-

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\* Victor Riesel, in nationally syndicated newspaper column of Aug. 23, 1949.

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cations. Labor columns appear daily in most metropolitan newspapers.

Virtually every known technique of communication finds a place in the programs of the national labor organizations—press releases, posters, pamphlets, radio, the speaker's platform, badges, buttons, and band stands. The Political Action Committee of the CIO in a national election has distributed nearly 85 million booklets, and has installed more than a half million posters at selected display points. Radio handbooks, speaker's handbooks, guidebooks for women workers, pamphlets on the place of the Negro in election activity, handbooks for ward and precinct leaders, and provocative movies are being produced in far greater volume than has ever before been undertaken by any group other than the nation's two major political parties.

Even more significant than the size of current activities and appropriations is the fact that national labor organizations have begun to replace their press agents, side show barkers, and patent medicine salesmen with some of the nation's most competent public relations practitioners—men who measure results in terms of friends won and people influenced rather than in terms of headlines and circulation.

## GOVERNMENT WANTS TO DOMINATE

The federal government alone, in 1948, took nearly one and one-third times as much money out of the pockets of the public as the total amount

which all Americans paid to farmers for all the food they ate, the food the government shipped to foreign countries, the grain that was bought for animals, and the fiber that went into 80 per cent of U. S. clothes, furnishings, industrial fabrics, and exports. In other words, the federal treasury took \$41 billion in taxes as compared with a total cash farm income of \$32 billion.

To keep the public quiet about the fantastic levels of existing budgets, and willing to listen to proposals that even greater pies be plucked from the sky, requires quite a bit of doing. Hence the most extensive, and the most costly, public relations program which the nation has ever known—that of the executive branch of the federal government.

### *World's Largest Public Relations Employer*

The total number of “information” and “education” people employed by federal agencies has never been accurately tabulated and reported, but their number is estimated at more than 3,000 full-time and 25,000 part-time publicity men, including both accurate and ambiguous titles. The U. S. government is easily the world's largest employer of public relations talent. Virtually every top drawer bureaucrat, and many in the middle drawers, has at his disposal an entire staff of public relations people.

Some years ago, when a check was made from October through December, it was found that more than seven million copies of newspaper releases were sent out by federal offices in that three-month

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period; and it is known that more than 500 motion pictures have been made in a single year, or an average of about one and a half films per day. The nation's radio stations, whose federally-controlled licenses must be renewed at regular intervals, are most generous in providing time for government-sponsored broadcasts.

Publicity staffs originally were employed by federal branches and bureaus to perform the specific and necessary function of keeping the public informed concerning their affairs. Later the work was broadened in appropriate instances to include the distribution of information developed by government study and research—for example, the farm bulletins published and distributed by the Department of Agriculture.

### *“Publicity Experts” Under Other Names*

As far back as 1914, however, it had become so apparent that the government agencies were using their publicity personnel to promote their own interests that Congress by law forbade the expenditure of appropriated funds for “publicity experts” unless specifically authorized. Hence it is that so few publicity experts—and so many directors of information, chief educational officers, directors of publications, and related classifications—are employed by federal agencies.

Despite all the noms de plume and fancy nomenclature, however, it still remains that the chief desire of every bureau and agency is to expand, the chief desire of every party is to remain in office.

and the chief job of the government publicity man is often political propaganda to accomplish one or both of these objectives. Federal bureaus in fact have become ever-increasingly eager to tell the public what to think, and to sell to the voter those ideas and programs and appropriations which they want sold. The result has been increased political advantage for those in office over those who are out, and at times even the confusion of patriotism with loyalty to the party in power.

Time after time the military services have conducted propaganda campaigns to frighten the public into urging Congressmen to vote for the full amount of requested appropriations. The Navy has engaged in a propaganda fight for public support of ships versus planes, and the Air Force has fought back for planes versus ships. Probably the most certain known way of inspiring a spontaneous and intensive public relations campaign is to arrange for a Congressman of considerable stature to make public demand for a cut in the appropriations for a major federal agency.

### *Promoting the Party in Power*

Most vicious of government efforts to influence public opinion, and most immediately vital to agriculture, are those wherein the prestige and the funds of federal agencies are used to promote social programs specifically designed to increase the political appeal of the party in power through "free" benefits in one form or another. In pounding for such programs the federal drum-beater invariably

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places his emphasis upon the free medicine or the higher pensions or the greater security. He pictures the sponsoring political party as the giver of great and good gifts—the creator of a brave new world of less work, more pay, no worry, and all you do is vote for our side and make your Congressman do what we tell him.

The tax-paid propagandist never points out the ugly but accurate fact that no government has ever disbursed a single dollar with one hand without having to collect more than a dollar in present or future taxes with the other. And he plays down or ignores entirely the matter of increased government control of daily living which is usually inherent in his brave new scheme.

The result of such activity is that the government is not today a neutral or an impartial agency in the consideration of national issues and economic relationships. It is a direct partisan participant in political conflict over such matters, and the most powerful ally of whatever political group may be currently in office.

### *Putting Over a "Plan"*

Certainly, for example, the Department of Agriculture in 1949 could not have been considered either impartial or non-partisan in its handling of the so-called Brannan Plan. Here was a plan, regardless of its merits or lack of them, which was admittedly sponsored by the Democratic Party for the purpose of winning over the farmer at one end with high subsidies and the consumer at the other end



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with low prices, without too much emphasis on the expenses in the middle. It was vigorously opposed by the recognized spokesmen of every reputable national farm organization, received so coolly at "mass" meetings of farmers as to be embarrassing to local party officials, and rejected by Congress.

Instead of accepting a decision of the elected representatives of the American public and proceeding with the full-time job of being Secretary of Agriculture, the Plan's sponsor—a member of the President's cabinet and administrator of 82,000 federal employees—announced in effect his renewed determination to force acceptance. For months on end, his only activity reported generally in the public press was in behalf of a vote-getting scheme designed to benefit his party in the following year's elections. It cannot be denied in such a case that the national government was acting as public relations agent for a political organization.

## OTHER GROUPS WANT OTHER THINGS

Labor unions and the executive branch of the federal government are the largest but by no means the only groups in America which are attempting through campaigns and programs of various kinds to sell their ideas and opinions to the public. Before the war, forty states had set up promotional budgets, and many cities and counties had established public relations, publicity or advertising programs to attract industry, tourists, capital, and other assets.

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Industries, trade associations, and individual companies in increasing numbers are conducting carefully planned programs to win public confidence and support. The alcoholic beverage industry is seeking through enlightened public relations techniques to minimize the opposition of crusading drys. The railroads are pleading their cause before the public in national magazine advertisements; individual roads are buying goodwill-building space in newspapers on their lines; and dining car menus are striking a blow against special taxes on tickets.

Bowling alleys a few years ago were looked upon by the public as basement or second story affairs one step ahead of pool rooms. Intelligent public relations, financed by manufacturers of balls and pins and other equipment, has converted bowling into the nation's most popular and most widely patronized indoor sport. Thousands of super-modern alleys include ministers and ladies as regular patrons, and "leagues" of church teams compete in major cities.

The National Association of Manufacturers is seeking a sympathetic public ear for the problems of industry. The U. S. Chamber of Commerce is urging greater public appreciation and protection for small business. The jute mills of India are willing to place hundreds of thousands of dollars behind a program of goodwill for burlap bags among American farmers. And the lawyers of Virginia have appropriated funds to explain the functions and virtues of the legal profession to the citizenship of their state.

## PROBLEM

Throughout the land, group after group is learning that it moves more rapidly ahead when it becomes fully conscious of the all-controlling power of public opinion, and sets out actively to earn and retain public favor.

## Chapter II

### INVENTORY

American agriculture, if it continues to hold enough friends and influence enough people to maintain its leadership, is going to be forced to adopt a program of persuasion which will assure successful relationships between it and all the various publics that are vital to its welfare.

If the farmer gets wage legislation he cannot live with, it will not be because a few so-called "labor barons" tell Congress what to do. It will be because each individual Congressman who votes for such legislation *thinks*, at least, that a majority of the voters in his district are either in favor of, or amenable to, his action.

If he gets socialized medicine and socialized agriculture, or a federal budget which requires confiscatory taxes, or regimentation to the point of peonage, it will be because public opinion supports or acquiesces in such measures. The Congressman does not live—at least he does not live long in the form of a Congressman—who consistently votes at variance with the will of his constituents. To him and to the politician at any other level, "the voice of the people is the voice of God" as much today as at any time in this nation's history.

## INVENTORY

### THE FARMER'S HANDICAPS

In today's organized competition for public favor, any program for agriculture must face substantial disadvantages as compared with the programs of labor, government, or industry.

The farmer has no national fund for public relations activity, and no easy way of getting one. He does not have, and he would not tolerate, any organization with the compulsory dues and assessment power which unions exercise over their memberships—power so complete that a union could, and did, bar the world's best known motion picture director from further employment in the movie industry because he refused to pay a one-dollar special assessment. A one-dollar special assessment by the AFL for public relations would mean a \$7 million program, and by the CIO, \$6 million.

Government public relations programs have behind them the financial support of taxation. Thus the pocketbook of the prospect becomes the source of funds with which to persuade him. Frequently the limiting element is not so much the volume of expenditure involved as it is the point at which fear of political exposure exceeds the desire to proceed. Subtlety of execution and genius of disguise in such cases are more important than budgets. Taxpayers may frown on direct appropriations for federal publicity, but diversion of the salaried time of highly placed administrative and executive officials is difficult to control.

Industry's advantage in public relations financing lies in the relatively small number of large

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manufacturing units whose cooperation is needed, and the high average potential contribution per unit.

The volume of manpower which can be placed behind any agricultural program of public relations is as voluntary as is the volume of money. In enlisting manpower as in soliciting funds, the farmer does not have any weapon of coercion comparable with those available to labor and government. The same union dictation which can deny a man his job for failure to pay an assessment can deny it for failure to perform an assignment. Similarly, among government employees, the continuation of the monthly paycheck is a potent persuader. Certainly the existence of such weapons, whether they ever are used or not, is conducive to a degree of discipline which agriculture cannot match.

### THE FARMER'S ADVANTAGES

Probably the farmer's greatest single asset from a public relations point of view is his strategic position of indispensability. No one man—king, president, labor lord, or farmer—may be essential, but farmers as a group are. With the exception of those who take their living from the sea, they are the nation's one and only source of new replaceable wealth from year to year. Every other individual and group works at the mining of irreplaceable resources, at processing, or at performance of services.

Automobiles and radios are highly desirable products, but every man knows that when the big chips are down he can do without them. The public may

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not have thought about it lately, but it would readily agree that food and apparel take precedence over all other material things, and that food and apparel mean farms and farmers.

There is a fundamental public relations message in the story of farmers who have left the land for work in industry or in government to gain the increased earning power made possible by such a change. Suppose all U. S. farmers did the same. For a few months union membership lists and treasuries would swell still further, and bureau chiefs would have the prestige and higher ratings which come with more employees. But it would not be long before the nation would get a dramatic reminder of some important relationships it has been inclined to overlook because of the farmer's failure to tell his story.

### *Man's Love of the Land*

A second tremendous asset to any agricultural program of public relations is the latent or subconscious sympathy and friendliness which a majority of the public feels for those who till the soil. Even the man who participated in postwar efforts to blame the farmer for all high prices—including high wages and high prices of durable goods—is likely to have a soft spot in his make-up for the basic idea of farming.

Throughout history it has been the nature of man to love the land. Even now most men do not reach middle age without feeling at one time or another that they would like to have a farm of their own.

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Their forefathers lived by guns, axes, and plows; and most of today's generation have not yet been crowded together in cities long enough to erase their respect for the good earth and those who live by it.

Fortunately, in spite of enormous declines in the percentage of total U. S. workers employed in agriculture and the percentage of total population living on farms, most of today's leaders of public opinion were born either on farms or in small communities where farm consciousness ran high. And most of them are proud of it. Hence it is not too late, now, for agriculture to cash in on the inborn inclinations and responsiveness of important groups who a few years hence will be superseded by others whose sympathetic reactions will by no means be so automatic.

### *Quality of Leadership*

A third field in which agriculture possesses substantial advantages is that of leadership. In national farm organizations and their state and local units, in commodity groups, in cooperatives, and in the delegates who attend farm conventions, the character and caliber of agriculture's representatives and officials constitute one of its major assets.

No one ever heard of bodyguards and bullet-proof cars for farm officials. There is no savage rivalry for power among factions and individuals. There is no feeling of urgency on anybody's part to extract the last cent or the last concession from another group in order to retain position. Lust for personal advancement, or for the center of the national



## INVENTORY

publicity stage, has seldom, if ever, been associated with leaders of agricultural organizations.

Nor are these men so far removed from the mental processes of the man in the street that their efforts to persuade are likely to backfire in antagonism. Their background is neither one of slums nor one of silver spoons.

They are men who were reared on principles of thrift, honesty, kindness, self-control, and fair treatment of their fellows—men who absorbed loyalty and patriotism from the homes in which they were born and reared. Their ideology is neither extremely reactionary nor extremely revolutionary. Their spiritual roots are deep in the American philosophy their ancestors fashioned. As farmers they know the importance of what breeding can do for either pigs or people. No other group of leaders is better equipped to spearhead a public opinion program addressed to the basic virtues and good intentions which exist deep down in the minds and hearts of most Americans.

### *Potential Allies*

Finally, in its public relations activity, agriculture is sure to have the advantage of powerful allies. Unlike labor and government, the farmer is not trying to take over the country. He is not attempting to place himself in such a position of power that he can control the daily life of his fellow citizens, or stuff any new system or way of life down their collective throat. Hence no group has reason to fight him because it fears him.

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He is in most cases a capitalist, in that he owns property and seeks to make it pay a profit; and he is a laborer whose hours of work and expenditure of energy are such as to inspire the respect of any informed puncher of industrial time-clocks. The business man whom unions cannot hope to win is a good prospect for farmer cooperation; and many a union member whose ears are closed to the pleas of business is likely to listen to messages from men of the soil.

Allied with agriculture financially, and vitally dependent on its welfare, is a vast number of suppliers who exist for the purpose of filling the farmer's highly specialized and voluminous needs. The farmer is, in fact, the sole support of such important segments of business life as the makers and distributors of farm machinery and equipment, commercial feeds, fertilizer, insecticides, and other products essential to the production of food and fiber. He is, in short, himself a rather special sort of public whose programs, opinions, habits, and philosophy are of paramount importance to many other groups.

### *Chapter III*

## THE PROGRAM

How, without a national fund competitive in size with the public relations budgets of government, labor, or industry—how, without the payroll control of government, the disciplinary powers of unions, or the limited numbers of industry—can agriculture finance and man a program of sufficient size and effectiveness to maintain and strengthen its position of national leadership and public favor? How, under such conditions, can it cash in on its position of indispensability, on the latent sympathetic interest of a majority of the public, on the quality of its leadership, and on the potential strength and cooperation of its allies? How can it, through modern techniques of mass persuasion, protect its own welfare and at the same time serve the interests of the public and the nation?

The answer lies in one of the most fundamental and infallible laws of public relations—the law that the total of public opinion is equal to the sum of private opinions. Mathematicians express the same principle in the elementary geometric theorem that the whole is equal to the sum of its parts.

### 3,069 COUNTY CAMPAIGNS

There are 3,069 counties in the United States. Every single one of them either has, or is within

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reach of, a county or community farm organization. Suppose that every one of these local organizations should initiate, in its own particular area, a successful program to win for agriculture the friendship, understanding, and support of its own particular people. The result would be a national public relations achievement of monumental significance.

Regardless of how large a fund or staff might be available, no successful public relations program for agriculture could be operated entirely from New York or Washington or Chicago or any other city. The local community is the foundation of agricultural relationships. Public opinion takes root where agriculture lives, and from that root grow the privileges and prestige accorded to agriculture, the restrictions imposed upon it, and the influence wielded by it.

The American Farm Bureau Federation does not get its strength from its Chicago or Washington operations. The National Grange and the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives do not draw their power from headquarters offices. On the contrary, the headquarters offices and headquarters staffs of these and all other farm organizations get their strength from their individual units; and the units in turn get their strength from individual members.

It is a matter of common sense and scientific fact that agriculture's most certain way to national success in opinion molding is local success in winning friends in 3,069 counties.

This is not to imply that guidance regarding policies and positions at the national level is not

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essential, that assistance from national headquarters in the form of timely suggestions and publicity material is not desirable, or that an inter-organizational board of strategy employing competent public relations technicians would not add tremendously to over-all effectiveness. It is to say that even if all of these gears were in place—and some of them are—grassroots activity in 3,069 counties would still be the element which determined success or failure.

The need for early and substantial progress is so urgent, and the number of things which can be done immediately is so great, that there is neither necessity nor excuse for delay. Policies already established, positions already taken, and assistance already available through national and state organizational offices, are fully adequate to permit the individual local chapter to set in motion those local techniques and procedures which are the basic tools of public relations success. By moving ahead with facilities already at its command, the chapter can accomplish a threefold job. It can achieve immediate progress on local problems. It can prepare itself for any nationally coordinated program of public relations which its parent organization may establish or co-sponsor. It can prepare itself to produce maximum results in minimum time when its state or national office calls for emergency service in connection with legislative problems.

### WHO LEADS OFF?

Just as local activity is the key to national success in public relations for agriculture, so the

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acknowledged and chosen leader in a particular area is the key to success in local activity. The same logic, arithmetic, and common sense which lead to the local chapter lead straight on to the local leader.

The job may sound like a big one. It is. But not too big. Only rarely can one man influence an entire nation to any great extent. No individual public relations worker—volunteer or professional, in small town or metropolitan area—can make more than a tiny impression on the great total mass of public opinion. The man elected to leadership by the local farm group, however, can influence strongly and favorably his own organization and community. And by working with and through other key men in his own group and area, he can magnify his personal effort to achieve favorable, large-scale, lasting impressions.

The job likewise may sound strange. “Opinion molding” . . . . “program of persuasion” . . . . even “public relations”—these may be words and phrases which connote national staffs and budgets, and which perhaps mean less at home than at a distance. Yet public relations is identical on the Farm-to-Market Road, on Main Street, and on Fifth Avenue, except for proportions.

Public relations starts with the individual. Everybody has it. If people like you, act friendly, listen to what you say, and are willing to work with you and help you when they can, you have good public relations. If they are unfriendly, critical, suspicious, and inclined to be pleased when you get in trouble, then you have bad public relations. Finally,

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if people don't know you they are not likely to care what happens to you. They'll take, every time, the side of the fellow they know and like.

For the company, industry, farm organization, labor union, or politician, the best public relations is largely a matter of the Golden Rule, plus publicity. It is a matter of doing good, and seeing to it that your light shines as far and as brightly as possible. Tools and media are new. Speed and extent of communication are new. The fundamentals, however, are as old as the existence of organized society.

### WHAT TO SHOOT FOR

The public relations job of the local farm group, then, is basically the job of seeing to it:

1. that the people of the county or community are conscious of what agriculture means to them, and what it stands for;
2. that their opinion of agriculture and goodwill toward it are such that they come to its support and fight for its welfare when necessary.

This basic goal may be shortened to slogan length or expanded into a full-fledged set of objectives, or both, depending upon the wishes of the local group and the nature and formality of the program it plans to conduct.

In slogan form, the goal of the local program is to "*Keep the Public Informed—Keep the Public Friendly.*" Certainly the job may be considered accomplished only when, and as long as, the public is informed, friendly, and ready to fight FOR agriculture.

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Expressed as a list of objectives, the basic goal of the public relations program may be broken down into just as much detail as local preferences may indicate. There are, however, three major objectives which form a framework into which all other objectives may well be fitted. They might appropriately be adopted as *permanent general objectives* under which all specific projects or activities could be classified, and can be identified most easily as: (1) the national objective, (2) the local objective, (3) the organizational objective.

### NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Important as peculiarly local headaches may appear in the light of day-to-day operations, there is no single problem — absolutely no problem — of such personal significance to each individual American farmer as the future treatment which agriculture receives at the hands of the national Congress and the executive branch of the federal government.

Already the farmer's personal income and his personal outgo are intimately affected. Quotas control acreage of important crops; loan schedules affect prices at which he sells; tariffs and minimum wage laws influence the markets in which he buys; and tax bills determine how much he can keep for himself out of what is left. Certainly his personal livelihood is closely bound to the actions, or lack of them, taken at the nation's capital.

It already has been emphasized on earlier pages that the attitudes and actions of politicians follow, as surely as night follows day, the dictates of public



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opinion. It has been emphasized further that national public opinion consists of the sum total of local opinions. Hence the national objective of the local farm group becomes this: *To establish relationships with the public in its own community and area which will assure the solid support of that area for national political policies which will promote and protect basic Americanism, and thereby best protect the real interests of farmers.*

### *Would Defeat Socialism*

Here is a wholly reasonable and attainable objective which, if pursued and reached by local agricultural groups, each in its own familiar home area, would halt—with the finality of doomsday—America's march toward socialism. Not only would it prevent the reduction of U. S. agriculture to a condition of involuntary servitude to the state; it would at the same time assure industry of freedom from nationalization, and the factory worker of freedom from dictation by union bosses he could not control. For all of these are parts of the same politico-social concept—a concept under which a “state” made up of the appointees and employees of the group in power plans the lives and issues the regulations for farmer, factory worker, and property owner alike.

England's farmers failed to reach this first objective. Perhaps it was because they were too few in number and importance. Perhaps it was because they did not have the vision, or the leadership, or the proper knowledge of public relations tools and how to use them, or adequate farm organiza-

## GRASSROOTS PUBLIC RELATIONS

tions. Regardless of cause, the result of failure to keep the public "informed, friendly, and fighting" for agriculture's welfare is that the British farmer today is as rigidly controlled as is the coal miner, the grocer, the government clerk, or the organ grinder's monkey. He is not even allowed to eat eggs laid by his own hens.

### *Immediate Start Imperative*

Public opinion, and the political manifestations of it, did not put the English farmer in his present predicament overnight. Years of conditioning of the public mind by socialistic promises and propaganda were necessary—conditioning which the farmer either did not or could not offset.

Such conditioning already is well under way in America. It will not be possible to counteract it with swift, spectacular public relations moves when once it becomes dominant. No public relations program has ever been conspicuously successful in the role of fire department. Not only does the public refuse to make quick changes of mind because of the sudden screams of a group which is pinched; it will even refuse to take the screams at tone value, or consider them wholly sincere, if the only time it ever hears from the group is under conditions of emergency.

Efforts at socialistic mental conditioning can be controlled, however, by a continuing public relations offensive in every local area. They can never gain even an important toe-hold if each local agricultural group establishes relationships with the public of

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its own community and area which assure the solid support of that area for national political policies which protect the real interests of farmers.

### *How It Works Out*

Once this major objective of "public relationship" is established on a basis of proper information and friendly understanding in the individual community, all manner of seemingly impossible national agricultural problems fall logically into place. The protection of agriculture from socialistic schemes of either a militant minority or an opportunistic political administration becomes a matter of getting word from the grassroots as to how the home Congressman should vote on a bill. And protection from the expressed ambition of labor moguls for political domination becomes a matter of getting the word around as to how the homefolks should vote on a Congressman. While the above is perhaps over-simplified, the principle is wholly sound; and the procedures are powerful, efficient, and direct.

What individual bills are to be supported or opposed, what administrative regulations are to be accepted or protested, what issues and politicians are to be fought as inimical to fundamental Americanism—these are questions which take the form of specific individual objectives to be determined through the established democratic procedures of the major farm organizations. The important consideration here is that the first and indispensable requirement for successfully handling any of them

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is the support of local public opinion in a majority of America's counties.

### LOCAL OBJECTIVE

The second general objective to be sought through the public relations program is similar to the first; and successful attainment of either of the two is likely to bring attainment of the other. It is: *To establish relationships with the public which will assure solid support for local policies, programs, and projects which protect the real interests of farmers.*

Obviously the same informed and friendly local public which is ready to join the farmer on national issues is disposed to be cooperative in the solution of his local problems. What those problems are, and what solutions are needed, will vary widely from community to community, and can be determined only on that basis. In one area the farmer's greatest local problem may be inequitable land taxes and assessments. In another it may be roads over which to move his products to market. It may be schools for his children, marketing facilities, or the need for a full-time county agent.

Wholly aside from problems involving agencies or officials of local government, the farmer has highly practical gains to make through establishment of favorable relationships with his hometown neighbors. Local business leaders, for example, can be influenced to spend time and money on the establishment of needed agricultural processing plants. The backing of civic organizations can be obtained for worthwhile projects benefiting farm youth.

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Even the basic matter of land values may be measurably affected by the strength and stability of the farmer's position in local public attitudes.

Whatever the local problem, and whatever the solution, an informed and friendly public is the most certain assurance of an adequate and sympathetic solution.

### ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVE

The third and final general objective suggested for adoption by each county and community group is *to promote and maintain maximum prestige and strength for the local farm organization.*

The farm organization is the farmer's voice. It is his agent and representative in his contacts with government, with other groups, and with the public. It is the catalyst through which his own strength and that of his neighbors is fused for effective action. As obvious as such statements may appear, the need for emphasis on organizational strength as a vital and primary objective can hardly be overstressed.

It is highly doubtful, for example, that the average farmer realizes that his *only* defense against the pressure and propaganda of government and other groups lies in his own organizations. Without them he would be unable even to receive a true picture of the direction in which his interests lie, much less to fight for them. His information on national agricultural problems and the programs for their solution would come only through controlled and usually colored channels. He would be served with

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a flood of political interpretations and a famine of straightforward facts.

### *Wolves in Sheep's Clothing*

There have been frequent indications that political planners ensconced in high government office are endeavoring to sell the idea that their regiments of employees, and not the farmer's own organizations, are the "true" voice of agriculture. Certainly it is common knowledge that officials of both government and labor have endeavored to divide the farmer against himself through promotion and recognition of wildcat pseudo-farm organizations.

With a great show of sincerity, and with convenient oversight of Supreme Court statements interpreting their purposes, AFL leaders announced in advance of the 1950 election campaign that "the individual farmer and the city worker have everything to gain through mutual political action as voters." The spider-and-fly technique of tempting the "individual" farmer to come into the unions' political parlor was obviously a slap at the farmers' own organizations, and doubtless did not go unnoticed as such.

A national farm official summed up the case as follows:

"Farmers are going to be represented. They are going to be represented by government agencies which can never be effective spokesmen for farmers . . . or they're going to be organized directly into labor unions or puppets thereof, or they're going to be 'spoken for'

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by self-appointed business or political spokesmen . . . or they're going to organize, staff and operate hard-hitting organizations of their own. The choice is how you are going to organize, or be organized, and who is going to call the tune."

### *Effects of Good Public Relations*

An intelligent and energetic program of public relations is the natural and certain answer to the problems of organizational strength. Such a program automatically generates publicity and increases prestige—both matters of primary importance to the health and progress of the local chapter.

Publicity and prestige mean increased membership, and increased membership means new usefulness and power. No one wants, on the other hand, to belong to a passive, little-known group. Enthusiasm of workers, diligence of committees, collection of dues, and attendance at meetings will grow while all the other problems and headaches of organizational operation are certain to shrink as the public relations program expands.

The idealistic attitude of doing a good job and letting the credit take care of itself becomes pure stupidity when adopted by an organization operating in the pressurized atmosphere of today. Not only is it desirable that the group attract to itself as much favorable attention as possible; it is further advisable for it to dramatize its service and accomplishments in such a way that they will have maximum personal meaning to as many individuals

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as possible. The organization which lets its light so shine before men that they may see its good works will be glorified by its members. It will also find itself prepared when the necessity arrives for increasing the candlepower and intensifying the voltage.



## *Chapter IV*

### THE MESSAGE

There is nothing mysterious and there are no magic tricks or fairyland shortcuts about the job you are setting out to do. You don't need special training, and you don't need to be a genius. You don't need to know about linotypes or complicated presses or the tall steel towers of radio—for you are not going to be dealing with gadgets or buildings or machinery. You are going to be dealing with people—and people are right down your alley. They like you. If they didn't, you would not be an agricultural leader in your area. You would not be preparing to initiate a public relations program for agriculture's welfare. Nine chances out of ten you would not be reading this page.

### THE QUESTION OF TIME

Your job of influencing public opinion, however, is not one that can be accomplished overnight. A good strong editorial in next week's paper won't do it, nor will a series of radio programs—not any more than one rock thrown into a lake will raise the water level significantly.

Public opinion, except in dramatic cases of common disaster or international outrage, is inclined to change slowly. Genius and cleverness are not essential to bringing about such a change, but hard work,

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perseverance, and determination are. It can be done without great subtlety, but not without continuity and persistence.

Fortunately, the nature of public relations work is such that most people enjoy doing it. Its nature also is such that practice builds proficiency at an exceedingly satisfactory pace. Add to these the fact that in the case of agriculture a great cause is involved, and it becomes logical to expect a minimum of difficulty in obtaining adequate volunteers for sustained activity. Once it is rolling, the job takes on a crusading spirit which neither commercial promoters nor exponents of less fundamental causes can normally achieve.

### THE QUESTION OF MONEY

The activities suggested here are based on the supposition that you have no money, or that you have at best a few dollars for paper and stamps and perhaps a box of candy now and then for volunteer typists. It would be helpful if you could have a few additional dollars for an occasional professional photograph, but you can get along with your own or some other amateur's Brownie if necessary.

This is not intended to imply by any means that you will be able to get by free. There is no public relations Santa Claus and there is no such thing as free publicity. It means, however, that you are in an excellent position, as a representative of agriculture, to use brains instead of a budget and to pay in cooperation rather than in cash. Certainly in your own county and community, the sincerity and

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diligence of you and your committeemen will more than make up for lack of local money.

### *Giving More than You Get*

Finally, your job is not one of going out to beg. It is not one of asking the editor to "contribute" space or the radio station to "contribute" time. Charity and philanthropy are out. The emphasis is to be on giving, not getting. Unless you give at least as much as you get, the program will be as short-lived as its results are meager.

You are *giving* to the editor when you supply him with space-worthy facts. You are *giving* to the luncheon club when you furnish a well-informed agricultural speaker. You are rendering a service when you provide the public with information on the activities, progress, and needs of those on whom its physical sustenance depends. Indeed, if the facts are not space-worthy, if the speaker is not informed, if the information is not beneficial, then the publication or the hearing is of no more value to the farmer than to the public. To put it another way, unless you give material of public interest, you don't get the interest of the public, and the project fails of its purpose.

There is then no need—in fact, no excuse—for an apologetic approach to any of the media whose cooperation is essential to the success of the public relations program.

### WHERE OPINIONS COME FROM

It has been pointed out previously that public opinion is actually the collective opinion of many

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individuals. Individual opinions, in turn, are formed for the most part on the basis of second-hand information—information which is read in newspapers or magazines, heard over the radio, or received by word of mouth from other people. It is the exception rather than the rule when an opinion is formed entirely on the basis of first-hand knowledge or observation.

### *Everybody "Knows How"*

Only 19 per cent of Americans, for example, live on farms, yet virtually every U. S. adult has some sort of opinion as to how farmers should live and how they should be treated. Members of state and national legislatures who never milked a cow or hoed a row debate violently, and sometimes authoritatively, over agricultural problems. Men who would hardly know a Black Angus from a White Rock vote on laws which affect prices of beef and poultry. They get their information, and form their opinions, from reading and hearing what others write and say.

It is the job of your public relations program to see that your public hears the story, and receives the information, that will assure the most favorable opinion and the most effective support. To do that job, the story must be tied to local interests—local crops, local people, local activity. It is a story which will vary greatly as to kind and quantity of material, yet in general it will follow a pattern which may at least be outlined here. It falls logically into three classifications.

## THE MESSAGE

### THE ORGANIZATIONAL STORY

The first and most obvious source of material for your public relations program is your organization itself. It is a bountiful and continuing source of material worthy of treatment both by ink and by air. Its activities, its meetings, the positions it takes on legislation, the resolutions it passes, the awards it bestows, the recognition it wins, elections of officers or of delegates to state and national meetings, appointments of committees, activities of an affiliated women's group or youth group, sponsorship of contests, special demonstrations of new practices or new equipment—these and a score of other possibilities are grist for your publicity mill.

Such material usually has the distinct advantage of being "spot news" and of being well stocked with the names of local people. It is the easiest of all material to obtain, has high editorial acceptability, and offers a source of almost constant contact between your organization and the public. It does more than inform. It demonstrates activity and builds in the public mind the impression that local farmers are an alert and aggressive group—genuine contributors to the vitality of civic life.

Appearance of such material in the channels of public communication has the further effect of strengthening the farm organization among both its members and prospects. Almost any member you ask will deny at once that he has any interest in personal publicity—yet almost every one of them will buy at least six copies of any newspaper which contains a story about him.

## GRASSROOTS PUBLIC RELATIONS

Volunteer groups, like individuals, definitely feed on their own publicity, and there is no food more nourishing insofar as membership rolls and interest are concerned. People just naturally feel that there is profit and prestige in being part of an organization whose activities and attitudes are prominently and favorably reported by editors and others whose job it is to judge the news.

### THE COMMUNITY STORY

The second classification of story material for use in your public relations program deals with the contribution of agriculture to the financial well-being of your county or community.

Local business men and the public doubtless have some sort of opinion or impression as to the relationship which exists between your crops and their cash registers and pay checks, but the chances are that their knowledge is definitely—perhaps even dangerously—faulty and incomplete. Does the public in your county know the number of dollars dumped into the stream of local business as a result of agricultural activity? Does it know the cash value of farm crops and livestock, the payrolls of agricultural processing plants, or the value of the investment represented by farm lands and buildings and equipment? Does it know the meaning of farm activity to such local business groups as feed and fertilizer stores, banks, implement dealers, and hardware stores?

And does your public appreciate the fact that the harvests its farmers reap from the soil are the only

## THE MESSAGE

*new* wealth their community creates, unless commercial fishing is available?

Here is pocketbook appeal that can be made to reach into every branch of community life. Here may be found information which, although not at all startling to you and other farm officials, may be a source of considerable amazement to the public at large. It is a story which must be told to the man in the street if he is going to be "informed, friendly, and ready to fight" for the welfare of his rural neighbors.

### *Where to Look for Help*

Ways and means of obtaining material for the community story are somewhat less obvious than in the case where organizational material is involved, and will vary somewhat from state to state.

A good starting point in most cases will be your county agent. He can give you, or get for you from state Extension Service headquarters or from Washington, county figures on crops, livestock, yields per acre, and cash income. He can give you comparisons with other counties, and general statistical information. Certainly a talk with your county agent, both about information he can obtain, and about other sources for you or your committee to contact, is highly desirable.

In many areas the state department of agriculture will prove a valuable and interested source of cooperation. The ability of the department will depend upon its functions and facilities in your own particular state, but the fact that it looks for tax

## GRASSROOTS PUBLIC RELATIONS

support to the same public you are trying to reach should stimulate it to all possible assistance in your program to increase public appreciation of farms and farmers. If you live in a state where the department of agriculture is adequately financed and alertly operated, or where there is a program and a fund for the promotion of agricultural products, you are likely to find that a letter explaining your plans and purposes brings a most encouraging volume and quality of cooperation. Not only may you obtain facts and story material, but perhaps the assistance of staff writers to put it in form for use on press, platform, or radio—and perhaps an occasional visiting speaker to help present it.

Local business leaders and officials are another potential source of material for your community story. The local banker, for example, may write a signed story, give an interview, go on the air, or make a speech emphasizing agriculture's importance to the financial welfare of the area. Or the head of your largest department store may bear witness to the importance of local farms to local retail trade. What the written or spoken material from such sources may lack in the way of statistical documentation will be more than offset by the confidence which the public has in the business opinions of the local leaders whose names are attached to it.

### *Creating Your Own Story*

Other sources will occur to you as a result of your own familiarity with agricultural agencies and peo-



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ple in your own area. One with fascinating potentialities might be a first-hand investigation, or series of them, conducted by members of your own organization or by a women's auxiliary or affiliate if available. A committee of women calling on the freight agents of local railroads and truck lines, for example, to determine what percentage of outgoing freight originated on local farms, might not only turn up some interesting information but would rather certainly make quite an impression on the agents. A check on ownership of farm trucks, tractors, and passenger cars might reveal a story which would surprise the public, and also be of special value in winning increased good will and more active support from dealers and gasoline agents.

By no means to be overlooked are spot news stories on local crop conditions, floods or dust or drouth, insect damage, new varieties of seed, new kinds of equipment, new trends in plantings or in livestock. If the news is good, it will give promise of greater business activity for the area, and thus please the public. If it is bad, it can usually be traced to acts of God or the government, and can be used to emphasize losses which local business sustains when agriculture suffers.

## THE NATIONAL STORY

The final classification of material to be suggested here for local use is that which emphasizes the inseparability of successful farming and national welfare. If such material appears at first

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glance to be rather far-fetched for inclusion in the local public relations story, the appearance is deceptive. For there is no other classification of material which, with proper treatment and local sponsorship, offers greater personal appeal for the average man in the street.

The full dinner pail—security of food and clothing—bulging grocery and dry goods shelves unencumbered by ration points—these are features of American life which are virtually unknown in most of the world. Yet the average man fails to remember, unless you remind him, that such things come from American farms. It has never been adequately emphasized to him that, while factories may produce payrolls sufficient to pay for a chicken in every pot, the pot will nevertheless be empty unless chicken farmers have the freedom, the ability, and the incentive to continue raising chickens.

Material in this classification is available from several sources. You probably can pull some of the very best of it right out of your own experience and imagination. You will pick it up now and then from the editorial pages of national farm magazines. Your nearest librarian can show you how to dig it out of books. The headquarters of your farm organization can supply you, and can specify additional sources.

While this is a type of material which is usable in almost any medium, it is particularly appropriate for signed articles, for dramatization in skits or radio programs, for speeches, and for submission to the local editor as a possible source of editorial com-

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ment. In every case, its public relations value is greatly improved if it can be tied up with local crops, local people, or timely events.

If you keep your organizational story, your community story, and the national story constantly before the public of your area through the groups and media available, results in terms of a prosperous organization, community confidence, and political preparedness will be as certain as the outcome of elections in Moscow.

## *Chapter V*

### SPECIAL GROUPS TO BE WON

As you move into your program to inform and make friends of the public, you will find that there are a number of special groups whose cooperation will smooth your way and speed your progress substantially. In fact, there are some without whose support you simply cannot get along satisfactorily.

#### LOCAL OPINION LEADERS

In most communities there is a small group of individuals who, through property, position or personal prestige, exercise an unusual and perhaps dominant influence on local life and thought. They are the people to whom others look for leadership, and whom they are accustomed to follow. In some areas and in some instances it may be considered that they virtually make up the mind of the public for it. Win all of them or even most of them to your side, and you will have made a long start toward all three of the objectives suggested for your public relations program.

While it is perhaps less glamorous at the community level, the principle involved here is a part of the same sort of psychology which enables a tiny group of top bracket designers to dictate fashion to such an extent that American women, in order to conform, feel compelled to discard or

## SPECIAL GROUPS TO BE WON

remodel perfectly good and appropriate wardrobes. It is the principle of all testimonial advertising. It has been a guiding rule of mass behavior since some primitive African princess stuck a highly polished bone through her hair, hung scarce tiger teeth from her ears, and thus influenced the women of her tribe to adopt a practice which still results in the sale of tens of millions of dollars worth of jewelry each year.

In making up his mind about agriculture, the first impulse of the average man is to follow the opinion of some leader whom he trusts. It may be an editor, a banker, a politician, a teacher or a preacher, but the list in your community is important enough, and small enough, to justify special attention from the very beginning of your program.

### *Few As Your Fingers*

You and your associates will know who such men are in your area. Hence the following classifications are offered solely as a list for use in stimulating and checking your own thinking: editors or owners of newspapers and radio stations—presidents or key members of civic and luncheon clubs—presidents or key members of educational organizations and institutions—preachers—school superintendents—heads of larger local business firms—local political leaders and government officials—presidents or key members of professional and fraternal groups and charitable organizations—Chamber of Commerce officials—large property owners.

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While this check list may seem long, you are likely to find that the real opinion leaders in your county or community can be counted on your fingers—certainly on your fingers and toes. You are likely to find that they are well acquainted with each other, and that a majority call each other by their first names. Hence it is important that in going after their cooperation you repeat the “leader” formula and start with the individual who comes nearest to being “leader of the leaders.”

### *How to Approach*

There is no better approach to this group than a full and straight-forward explanation that you are setting out to do a job of promoting public understanding of agriculture’s needs and problems, and that you greatly need and earnestly seek their assistance. If you make an accurate selection of the one key man in your area, present the story to him personally, and win his sympathy and interest, the route to the rest of the leadership group is likely to become clear. Perhaps your key man may suggest an informal meeting at which you would outline to a small and carefully selected group the same story you have told him. Perhaps it will develop that personal calls on three or four additional individuals are indicated.

Invite local leaders, as the program progresses, to speak at your meetings. Make them honor guests at regular or special functions. Offer, if you feel it would help, some honor or award for outstanding service to agriculture on the part of a citizen not

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directly engaged in it—and present it at an annual farmer-businessman dinner.

The details of procedure will vary somewhat with communities and with personalities, but the principle is unshakable that the progress of your program will be both more rapid and more certain if, at the start, you win the members of the flock who wear the bells.

### ORGANIZATIONS

In every community there are organized groups whose influence on public opinion is substantially greater than an actual count of their members might imply. Included are luncheon clubs of business men such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions—fraternal groups such as Masons and Elks—veterans' organizations such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars—Parent-Teacher Associations—church clubs—business and professional associations.

In nearly every case, but particularly with respect to clubs of business men, the relative importance of the organization is greatest in the small community, and becomes smaller as the size of the community increases. The Rotary Club, for example, which meets in the church basement in a town of 2500 people is certain to include almost 100 per cent of the leading men of the immediate vicinity.

Every organization is presently or potentially a pressure group of genuine importance to your public relations program. Not only is the individual member of each group likely to have personal influence well above the average, but action by any one group is likely to influence other organizations

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quite directly through overlapping memberships. A certain number of Kiwanians are also members of the American Legion, the wives of Legionnaires are members of the P.-T. A., and so on. It therefore follows that every time one group is won to your cause, you have hit a substantial lick in influencing the next group and public opinion as a whole.

The way you reach and handle these local organizations will be determined in each case by the nature and purposes of the organization itself. In the case of influential luncheon clubs and any others whose meetings include subjects of public interest, you will want to arrange for agricultural programs and agricultural speakers on at least a quarterly basis, and you will make sure that such programs are entrusted only to the most capable possible chairman. For church clubs or the P.-T. A. you may want to use the time-tested and always successful device of having a friendly teacher write a one-act play in which members of the group read their lines and dramatize their parts, unrehearsed.

Wherever possible you will want to see that at least one strong personality with agriculture's interests at heart is in a position of leadership in each organization.

Aside from its obvious results in terms of new friends and immediate publicity, such activity points toward the day when you may urgently need the adoption of a strong resolution, the appointment of a special committee, or the sponsorship of a special project as a matter of primary importance to your over-all agricultural program.



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### WOMEN'S GROUPS

Although women are included in some of the organizations referred to in the preceding paragraphs, their direct effect on public opinion is strongest when they are organized in special clubs or groups of their own.

There are today approximately a million more potential women voters than men. They disburse over 85 per cent of family income, buy 80 per cent of the nation's consumer goods, are beneficiaries of 80 per cent of its life insurance, own 70 per cent of its private wealth, inherit 68 per cent of all estates, and otherwise hold the balance of power.

Being by nature particularly concerned with the welfare of their families, their communities, and their nation, women in general are far more intensely interested in health, security and public welfare than are men. Organize them, give them a cause, and they become an irresistible force before which there are no immovable objects. City and county councils, state legislatures, and the national Congress will all bear witness to the success with which the hand that rocks the cradle can operate a steam roller if necessary.

It is estimated that there are close to 100,000 women's organizations active in the country today—civic clubs, mothers' and homemakers' clubs, music clubs, art clubs, religious, garden, professional, and general clubs. These clubs of women are generally more active and aggressive in carrying out group projects than are clubs of men. When they start a

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crusade or set a goal, they are apt to see the job through.

You will find that your goal of creating better understanding and public support for agriculture appeals strongly to women's organizations. Once you get your story before them through their meetings or otherwise—once you sell them on the service they can render by helping guard agriculture's welfare and productivity—you have won an ally whose influence on the public and the polls will stand you in good stead.

## SCHOOL PERSONNEL

There is an almost universal tendency to think of schools in terms of the future—future customers, future voters, future molders of public opinion. Schools are all of that, and more. Almost 100 per cent of the consuming public—today, right now—is connected in some way with the 30 million students, million teachers, half million administrators and members of boards of education, and others who go to make up and operate the school system.

“A little child shall lead them” is good public relations doctrine when the child comes home telling Papa and Mama what teacher has said or is planning for the class in cooperation with your program or project. And a leaflet or mimeographed sheet brought from school is likely to have as high a percentage of readership as anything except the figures on a pay check.

Fortunately, organization of the school system is such that all schools in an average county can be

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reached through one or two points of contact. Through personal calls on the county superintendent, and the superintendents of whatever separate school districts operate locally under independent jurisdictions, you will be able to determine the procedures which will be most effective in getting your story before school faculties, through them to students, and through students to parents.

A direct request from the superintendent or principal for the assistance of teachers in creating a better understanding of local agriculture obviously would open the way for all manner of special activity. A second type of "starter" might be a discussion of your story at a teachers' meeting or a regular session of the P.-T. A.

Enthusiasm on the part of both officials and faculty might be increased by a meeting between a committee of farmers and the school board. Such boards usually are composed of business men who would be quick to see the value of your program, and who would doubtless be inclined to express their interest where it would do the most good.

Once the active support or even the acquiescence of school authorities is obtained, it will probably be advisable to delegate to one individual, or to a special committee, the job of working with faculty members on the numerous and varied school projects through which your program might find expression. These projects, purely by way of example, might include:

*Special guests at chapel exercises*, such as boys and girls who have won 4-H Club awards, taken

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prizes at county or district fairs, or otherwise demonstrated leadership in agricultural activity;

*Speakers*—at chapel exercises, teachers' meetings, P.-T. A. meetings—selected for unusual agricultural knowledge or performance, and for their ability to put over an interesting story to the particular audience involved;

*Skits and one-act plays* presented by students in their own classrooms, before the entire school assembly, or at teacher or P.-T. A. meetings;

*Contests among pupils*, as discussed separately on page 91.

*Student tours*, by classes, through local agricultural processing plants, and visits to model farms—such tours and visits to include explanations of all major processes, and to be followed by class discussions or writing of essays;

*Classroom projects*, such as having students gather samples of the area's major agricultural products and all information they can obtain concerning them—(Note: A sure-fire variation where feasible is to grow plants in pots in the classroom as a build-up to discussion of the crop involved. Immensity of interest in such projects is indicated by the experience of the National Cotton Council in filling over 100,000 requests for packets of six free cottonseed as the result of a trial offer);

*Study projects*, such as essays for history classes on the contribution of agriculture to early American development, or laboratory demonstrations explaining elementary facts of soil chemistry to science classes; and

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*Distribution to students* of such suitable bulletins, leaflets, or other material as it may be practical to make available.

Whatever school projects are decided upon for your area, it is important that each include appropriate emphasis on agriculture's importance to the welfare of the community if the project is to play its full part in the public relations program. You will find in most cases that this will come automatically, yet a word of caution to your school committeeman may preclude wasted effort on projects which do not contribute materially to your objectives.

### POLITICIANS

When you try to influence a local banker or the president of a women's club to take some sort of favorable action in behalf of agriculture, you are conducting a public relations program. When you do the same with a politician you are a lobbyist; and folks who don't know any better—which is most of them—may begin to figure that through some strong and highly suspicious personal influence you can twist various and sundry representatives of the people around your wicked fingers.

### *Where and When to "Lobby"*

Such a concept of personal political effectiveness is, of course, pure hokum. There is only one kind of lobbying that is sure to pay off, and that is lobbying with the public. Also, there is only one most effective time to win the support of a politician,

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and that is before he is elected—before he is even nominated if possible. Once a man not committed to your cause has been elected to office by an unfriendly majority, or elected because of the aggressive campaigning of a group with goals hostile to your own, it is usually too late for “lobbying”. In short, the most certain way to win officials and influence politicians is to pick them and put them in office—a procedure which has been demonstrated with conclusive results by certain labor groups in highly concentrated industrial centers. Similarly, the most certain way of overcoming unfriendliness and hostility may lie in a change of officials. A public which you have won for agriculture can bring such a change to pass—it is, in fact, the only sure source of political satisfaction.

You will probably find, however, that your public relations problem with the politicians representing your area is not so much one of seeing that they are *friendly and ready to fight* as it is of seeing that they are fully and accurately *informed* regarding agriculture’s true wishes and welfare. To that end it is imperative that your committee establish, and maintain in a state of constant preparedness, whatever plan or machinery you may consider necessary for informing your political representatives quickly and convincingly regarding the attitudes of farmers and their friends in your area.

### *Personal Acquaintance*

Your first step, of course, is obvious, and no doubt has long ago been taken. It is to get ac-

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quainted—well acquainted. There is no substitute for personal calls and face-to-face conversations between you, as a recognized leader of your group, and your elected representatives, whether they be city councilmen, state legislators, or members of Congress. All the principles of good selling apply, including the rule that power and persuasion are increased by personal presence. Nothing you can put on paper, and no delegate you can send in your stead, is equivalent to acquaintance and frequent contact between you and your public officials.

Except in rare instances the politician is anxious to know you. He has good reasons. From a straight vote-getting standpoint, it is necessary that he know what people are thinking. You represent an important group in his county or district, and are therefore a key person among those who can tell him. In addition to getting votes, he wants to do a good job. He is, generally, a sensible and greatly harassed fellow-citizen who, like you, is above the average of those he represents. If you will take the time and trouble to come to know him, you will have taken a big step toward winning whatever support it is politically practical for him to give.

How far you may be able to go in establishing personal acquaintance between key politicians of your area and the officers and members of your organization will vary widely between areas and between political offices. It may be possible and appropriate for many of your members to call on your county supervisors, yet inadvisable for more than a few to attempt to make personal calls on

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Congressmen during their visits at home. The only rule in such matters must be your own good judgment.

### *Letters and Telegrams*

Next to personal contact and telephone calls from leaders among his constituents, personal letters are the best public relations medium that has yet been devised for winning a politician's support. To be effective, each letter must be an authentic personal expression—not a form letter copied and signed by dozens or hundreds of individuals. Form letters, which are easily and quickly identified, can sometimes do more damage than good. They tell the politician that he is being subjected to deliberate organized pressure from a central source, without giving him any accurate indication as to how widespread or intense may be the sentiment they are intended to reflect.

Letter writing is useful primarily as a means of obtaining specific action by the politician on a specific issue. Timing and volume of letters are all-important. Form and literary quality are of negligible value by comparison. Telegrams may be used to step up the pace where conditions of unusual urgency exist, although they should not be relied upon to replace the more personal type of message which is normally possible through letters individually written.

It will be found, by and large, that women are more effective letter writers than men, and that the members of your auxiliary may do a better job of promoting a successful letter-writing campaign than



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will their husbands. Certainly their aid should be enlisted.

### *Publicity and People*

A third major method of reaching the political group is through your local newspaper. While the general place of the newspaper in your public relations program is discussed on later pages, the special sensitivity of the politician to public print is worthy of extra emphasis. Particularly do state and national legislators watch their home papers intently. Their interest, not only in news columns, but in editorials, letters to the editor, and local features, offers a variety of approaches through which your story may be told. To make certain that a particular official does not miss the issue in which your message appears, there is the double safeguard of two or three clippings mailed to him by interested constituents.

There are some occasions when "trying your case in the newspapers" is the most practical way of winning the verdict of public opinion. Once such a verdict is plain, there is no difficulty in getting politicians to go along with it. As has been indicated previously, it is a matter of cause-and-effect as invariable as the flow of water down hill.

When the guns of political publicity are fired, however, they should be aimed carefully at the issue rather than at the politician. You will never want the name of your organization connected with a direct attack on a political figure in public print until and unless you have given up hope of his

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friendship and are going all out to defeat him. In the words of John Knox, "You cannot antagonize and influence at the same time."

Finally, in dealing with political personalities, never under-estimate the power of "people." "Packing" a county courthouse or a city hall during consideration of an issue, even when the group you represent is in the minority, has a personal, powerful, psychological effect on those who must make the decision. It creates an impression of keen and extensive interest in your cause. Not only will politicians notice it, but that part of the public which is still undecided may be influenced in your direction also.

## *Chapter VI*

### SPECIAL TOOLS TO BE USED

The ultimate goal of your program is to win for agriculture the friendship and support of the utmost possible number of people in your own county or community. Winning the maximum number means reaching the maximum number—as regularly and as often as possible.

There are two principal classifications of activity through which you can reach the most people, most often, with the most effectiveness. One is the work with civic leaders, clubs, school personnel, and other special groups, which has already been outlined. The primary purpose of such work is to reach through and beyond a particular group to those upon whom it has influence. Prestige and following, not the numerical strength of the group itself, are the important factors.

The second classification of activity consists of telling your story directly to large numbers or masses of people. It involves the use of special tools or media of communication through which your message may be placed before the eyes or delivered into the ears of thousands of individuals in minimum time. It involves printing presses and radio waves and techniques of production with which you may be entirely unfamiliar.

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As has previously been emphasized, however, "You are not going to be dealing with gadgets or buildings or machinery. You are going to be dealing with people. People are right down your alley." And because people are right down your alley, you know already that one of the surest and most effective ways of striking a responsive chord is the simple statement, "I need help." If you have not previously had experience in work of this kind, the strongest start you can make is to tell your newspaper editor and radio program director candidly what you are trying to do, admit your weakness, and ask them to help show you the way. Ask each of them what he would do if he were in your place and had been given the job of creating better understanding and friendship between farmers and the public in your area.

### NEWSPAPERS

It has been a long time since Thomas Jefferson said, "If it were left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." Despite all the spectacular advances which have been made in other means of communication, newspapers are still the nation's chief source of public information.

More than 1,700 dailies and nearly 9,000 weeklies, with aggregate circulation of some 62 million copies per issue, reach more people more often than any other medium. They are read by virtually every

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literate adult in the nation. With most, they are a personal daily or weekly habit. "My newspaper" has a meaning comparable with "my school" and "my hometown."

No single element in the county or community—none at all—is therefore so essential to winning and holding public good will as the local press. No outside publication, regardless of circulation, number of pages, or beauty of appearance, can match it in thoroughness of reading or in influence concerning local problems and people. Because printed impressions are received through the eye, they are retained longer than those received through auditory media. Your message is not missed, as in the case of radio, if the prospect is not at a particular place at a particular time. Stories are not lost if interruptions occur. Each copy of the average paper is read by two to five persons.

### *What the Editor Is Like*

Virtually every independent editor except the rare extremist is fundamentally pro-agriculture, whether he may agree with your organization in all of its positions or not. Like the farmer, he is at heart a free enterpriser. Like the farmer also, he is usually both capitalist and workman—a self-reliant natural champion of private initiative in business—an intense and articulate opponent of encroachment on personal life and freedom by big government, big business, or big labor.

In your first talk with the editor, admit frankly that you have come to him both because of the

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importance of his paper to your goals, and because of his ability as an individual to tell you how to do the best possible job. You will find that he wants to be friendly, and you may be surprised at how much more honest-to-goodness local agricultural news and interpretation he wants than he has been getting.

### *What He Expects*

You will find that your editor is willing to help you, but that he likewise expects you to help him. He is always under-staffed, usually battling deadlines, and constantly fighting to produce enough good local copy to avoid the necessity of using fillers from out of town. He is going to expect that you get agricultural news and ideas to him with speed and accuracy, and that you do it in such a way as to save his own time and help his own job as much as possible.

For purposes of simplification and clarity, the material you will provide to him may be considered to fall under two general classifications: (1) News, and (2) Features.

### *News*

News fundamentally implies "newness." To your editor, it means reporting a happening or event as quickly as possible after it occurs. It is, in the words of Webster, "fresh tidings; recent intelligence."

Broadly speaking, most of your organizational story as described earlier in Chapter IV will come

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under the classification of news; your community story will include both news and features; and most of your national story will fit under one of the several classes of features.

### *Check-list of News Sources*

The extent and variety of news material available to your public relations program may at least be suggested by the following list:

Regular organizational activities such as monthly meetings, election of officers, appointment of committees or of delegates, admission of new members, social events, etc.;

Regular activities of your women's auxiliary or affiliate;

Special projects and programs of the organization—including important resolutions passed, and positions taken;

Speeches by your officers or representatives;

Agricultural meetings held by other local groups in cooperation with your program or under your sponsorship;

Visits by out-of-town speakers or officials;

Announcements of contests and awards;

Farm rallies and demonstrations;

Crop news, including condition of crops, insect invasions, droughts or floods, local acreage estimates, prospective yields and values;

Factual accounts of the local significance of state or national legislation currently under consideration or recently passed;

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Releases or special reports—to which local names or figures may be added—obtained from state or national offices of the organization of which your local chapter is a part.

### *The Problem of Reporting*

The matter of getting your material into proper form for the editor can be handled in several ways, but in no case should it offer a substantial obstacle to full and accurate coverage. If you are operating in one of the relatively few counties where farm organizations have full-time or part-time employees, your paid secretary will doubtless be the answer. If you have no paid employee but do have a small fund, you may want to arrange with a local news correspondent to help out on a part-time basis. Some member may have a daughter or son who, through editorship of a school paper or former study of journalism, is especially qualified as a volunteer or part-time worker. In some cases your editor will be able to assign a staff man to whom you may report your news orally, from notes, instead of in written form. In occasional instances the editor or his representatives will be able to cover your newsworthy events personally.

You do not have to have an expert, however, to write an acceptable news account. And you do not have to be one in order to do it yourself if and when necessary. What your paper wants are the facts—just plain unvarnished facts set down in the order of their relative importance. To that end, there are a few simple suggestions which will help



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smooth the way for you or your appointee if you have not attempted to put news on paper before.

### *News Do's and Don't's*

*Do* write it while it is news. Aside from the fact that no editor is interested in a story that should have appeared in a previous issue, you will do a better job while your facts are fresh. Check your editor for deadlines.

*Do* make your first paragraph tell, if possible: Who . . . What . . . When . . . Where . . . Why . . . How. If you can't get these all in and keep the meaning clear, remember to put your most important facts in the first sentence and paragraph, the next most important in the next paragraph, and so on through your story.

*Do* stay away from ten-dollar words and all efforts to be "literary." Fine writing, even if you can do it, is not the style for news.

*Do* remember that names make news. Use as many of them as you can, and be careful—very careful—about their spelling.

*Do* type your story, double spaced, on one side of the sheet, or get someone to do it for you, unless you have arranged with the editor otherwise.

*Do* deliver your story in person if possible. You will find, *if* you do, that its chances for publication and good position are increased.

*Don't* include opinions in a straight news account unless you put them in quotation

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marks and give the name of the person who expressed them. There are legitimate methods of expressing your opinions through feature stories, but news accounts should stick to facts.

*Don't* be disappointed when the long account you write for the front page appears in five inches inside. It is the editor's job to judge news values, and you're going to miss your guess now and then.

*Don't* raise the roof about minor errors in editing or about typographical misprints.

### **Features**

The term "feature," as used here, covers all types of newspaper copy except straight news reports. Such material usually can be planned with care and published on a schedule designed to do the most good for your public relations program. Expressions of opinion, and direct efforts to influence public thinking, can be incorporated to an extent which is unacceptable in news accounts. There are at least six methods of presenting your story in feature form which you will be able to use in your local paper.

*Special articles* are the type of feature which you probably will be able to use most often. Essentially they are informative accounts which are not necessarily tied to a specific event, which emphasize the interesting and unusual, and which are written with greater freedom of style than straight news. Items such as the improvement of dairy herds or the

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increased use of mechanical equipment on farms, for example, are not news events which must be reported in the next issue; yet they may be of keen interest to the public and of substantial value to your program. The introduction of new crops or better varieties—important changes in acreage or agricultural production—the growth and achievement of farm youth organizations in your area—statistical accounts of the contribution of agriculture to local business . . . these illustrate subjects which can be more easily and more fully handled as special articles than as spot news.

*The signed article* is a variation which allows for greater freedom on the part of the writer in expressing personal opinion. Use of the writer's name in a by-line, or in an editor's note, makes it clear that any opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the paper. It is therefore important that signed articles carry the by-lines of individuals who, through title or position or personal prestige, will attract the interest and inspire the confidence of readers. A signed article on the meaning of farm income to the financial progress and prosperity of your county, for example, will be far more valuable to your program if it is signed by the county's most prominent banker than if it is signed by a school teacher. Similarly, a signed article on the probable effect of spring floods or summer drouth on farm production and income will be more convincing if it comes from the county's leading farmer or the county agent than if from an officer of a fraternal organization.

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The possibilities of the signed article are such as to make it a major potential asset to your newspaper program. Almost all of your community story and national story can be adapted to it, and it will at times be found useful in connection with legislative campaigns. It is limited largely by the number of appropriate and influential signers available, the amount of space the editor can reasonably provide, and your own good taste and judgment as to public tolerance.

*Interviews*, either with visiting farm officials or with outstanding local leaders, are a third method of putting across your story in feature form. They offer an excellent opportunity for you to put into the mouth of a "third party" some special idea or opinion or information which you are anxious to emphasize through print. The fact that the words are spoken by one important enough to be "interviewed by the paper" tends to add to their effectiveness.

*Human interest stories* capitalize on the fact that people would rather read about "people" than about anything else, and would rather have their emotions played upon than their intellects. Farm women making clothes from emptied feed sacks for overseas relief—a Junior Achievement company operated by farm boys—any story of success despite hardships or unusual difficulties—stories involving animals as something other than steaks or statistics—these constitute a type of newspaper feature which will lend spice and flavor to your program even though it may be difficult sometimes to aim them directly at your objectives.

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*Letters to the editor* can be made to tell your story with a directness and force of personality which no other type of newspaper material can surpass. Particularly are they effective in connection with subjects of a controversial nature or those involving political action. The one biggest thing to remember in connection with them is that they should not actually be written to the editor, but to his readers instead. Obviously neither you nor any other one individual in your group should write such letters with any great frequency or regularity. Even if the editor printed them, which would be unlikely, they would lose their effectiveness. The best procedure is to have letters written on a variety of subjects by a variety of individuals—men and women, large farmers and small farmers, the well-educated and the not so well, the succinct and the verbose.

*Editorials* are a potent and highly valuable type of feature which you simply do not do, yourself, except in those rare instances where an editor might ask for a signed "guest editorial." There is in most cases an atmosphere of sanctity and personal privacy about the editor's own page which makes it unwise to seek direct and specific favors in connection with it. It is entirely legitimate to ask the editor's support of your cause or your candidate, and even to urge him to give you all the editorial help he feels free to extend; but, unless you are close personal friends and are sure of your ground, direct requests for editorials should be avoided. A good personal talk with your editor on the subject you want treated, together with an expression of

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“hope” that he can help editorially, will do the job if it can be done.

*Daily or weekly columns* are not recommended unless an unusually able and willing writer is available for the job, and unless there is assurance of adequate material to sustain a high standard of performance. Even where these conditions are met, there is danger that a regular agricultural column will be passed over by most of the non-farm public. The average reader expects an agricultural column to present the farmer's point of view, and is likely to be less influenced by it than by a straight news presentation. Hence the column is better adapted to the job of promoting the farm organization among farmers than to the job of shaping general public opinion.

*Stunt publicity* is a type of newspaper material which in general is not for you. You need no “beauties, babies, and beasts” as a regular diet, although you will certainly not want to avoid any opportunity which can be developed without overdoing the “stunt” angle. There are still editors who subscribe to both ends of the axiom, “You need no excuse for printing a pretty girl's picture; there is no excuse for printing any other kind.” Stunts, however, are dangerous unless expertly handled. Some connotation you did not intend, or an effort at stunting which is overly obvious, can do serious damage to your program.

### ***Other Opportunities***

*Pictures* in the hometown paper are not necessarily “worth a thousand words,” and they can

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require considerable time and effort—yet their attention-getting and story-telling values are such that they deserve every reasonable consideration as an important part of your newspaper plan.

In the “news” field, you will find that you can step up the impact of your program with pictures of new officers, speakers, distinguished visiting officials, groups of farmers and politicians or business men working or conferring together, prize-winning members, prize-winning products, and a host of other possibilities. Your “features” similarly can be enlivened by pictures which supplement the written story. All of this is practical, of course, only if you have, or can obtain without too much difficulty, the facilities for transferring newsworthy faces and scenes to the printed page.

Your first problem is to get the photograph itself. Your best possible solution is to have your pictures made by a regular newspaper photographer, either as an assignment from his editor or under a special arrangement with you. Second best usually is to have the job done by a commercial photographer. Third, of course, is the amateur, a species which has become so prolific in recent years that you are almost certain to be able to find one who is willing to swap almost any amount of effort for some journalistic experience. Finally, there is always the possibility that you may be able to do this sort of thing yourself. Learning it, if you haven’t already, is no great trick.

Your next problem is the matter of an engraving, which in most counties must be ordered from out-

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side. Here is a subject for frank discussion with your editor. He may agree to run newsworthy engravings if you can arrange to pay for them—a common practice in many areas, particularly where society news is involved. Or he may be able to handle engraving costs if you handle pictures. In either case no large amount of money is necessary in order to give your program the spark of occasional pictures.

Whether you are taking pictures or directing the job, the really fundamental rules are relatively simple. They add up to the one big idea that you want simple, natural pictures that tell a story. Avoid the Napoleonic hand-in-shirt atmosphere. Don't let the subjects stare into the camera. Get action whenever possible.

*Big city newspapers* — perhaps only one, and perhaps two or three—may have a considerable volume of circulation in your area. Where the circulation volume is enough for you to be concerned with, there will also be a local correspondent. You can do an extra good turn for your own program, and for the cause of agriculture in a still broader area, by seeing to it that each correspondent receives all appropriate agricultural material.

City papers, for the most part, will be more interested in names and spot news than in features, although some of them take genuine pride in developing major features from what they consider to be their "trade territory."

*State farm papers* and *regional farm magazines* offer opportunities for reporting unusual agricultural activities in your area, and special achieve-



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ments by your organization or its members. While such publications are read almost entirely by farmers and are of little value in reaching other groups, the appearance of local material in their pages will be a source of pride and inspiration to your members and prospects. Editors of most state farm publications are eager for just the type of material which will do you the most good.

### RADIO

If your community is neither above nor below the average for the country, then about 97 per cent of its homes contain at least one radio, and many have extra sets in the bedroom or kitchen or automobile. There are more "radio homes" than there are families subscribing to newspapers.

This does not mean that the local radio station is a more important tool for your public relations kit than the newspaper. There are, for example, far more families in your area who listen largely to big-city stations than subscribe to big-city papers. When people turn on the radio they are usually looking for entertainment; when they pick up the newspaper they are usually looking for information, which is exactly what you are dispensing. Other contrasts between the two media, insofar as your own particular job is concerned, were suggested on page sixty-seven, including the fundamental psychological phenomenon that, in learning and retaining impressions, the ear is secondary to the eye.

The tremendous number of receiving sets in your area does mean, however, that through radio you can reach people you cannot reach otherwise, that

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you can repeat and emphasize your story to those whom you do reach in other ways, and that you can utilize the force of personal power and persuasion to a degree impossible in cold type. Roosevelt, Hitler, Huey Long, and Father Coughlin are adequate evidence of the lengths to which the advantages of radio's "living voice" can be carried in the molding of public opinion. Constructive or destructive, each was selling a program to the public.

It is true that listening requires no mental alertness, energy, or effort, whereas reading does. It is true that when you have a man listening to your program he can't listen to any competing program at the same time. It is true that radio is more personal, homey, and direct than type, and that you can come nearer to saying exactly what you want to say through a microphone than through a news story. But never, never forget—or let your radio sub-chairman forget—that entertainment in radio is spelled strictly with a capital "E". One flick of a button and your program is dead with a capital "D".

### *How to Get Started*

To put the power of radio back of your public relations program, start as you did with the newspaper. Have a frank and friendly personal visit with the owner, manager, program director, or whatever combination of these three may control the station's time and create its program schedules.

There is no question as to the sort of response you will find to your suggestion that the story of

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local agriculture be narrated and dramatized on the air. The Federal Communications Commission requires every station to devote a portion of its time to civic, educational, religious, or other programs of public interest. Your station, when it knows whom you represent and what you want to talk about, will welcome you. You are not asking for "free time", but for time which both the FCC and the station itself are glad to see used for purposes as basic as that of creating greater understanding between those who feed and clothe the public, and those who are fed and clothed.

The matter of obtaining time, however, is perhaps the smallest part of the job of informing and making friends of the public by air. Behind it comes the big additional step of seeing that the time is used in such a way as to put across your story and at the same time maintain an audience. The advice of the station's program director can be of tremendous assistance. Scripts and speeches obtained from state or national headquarters of your organization can furnish facts and background. The job, however, is one which for the most part must be planned on a local basis. Here are a few suggestions as to possible types of programs which may make it easier.

*News broadcasts* are the radio equivalent of the news columns in your paper and can utilize the same material. You can ruin a beautiful publicity friendship with both the newspaper and radio station, however, if you don't check on local press-radio relationships. You may find that it is per-

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missible for you to give the station an exact copy of anything you give the paper, with no worry about deadlines and no headaches involved. On the other hand, some editors still object strenuously to a piece of news being broadcast before they print it. Where conflict occurs, your best bet is to give the newspaper the break on "news," and concentrate your radio emphasis on other types of broadcasts. Even so, you are not likely to get left out of the newscasts entirely, for two reasons: one, that the radio station is inclined to use a summary of news even when it has already appeared in printed form; two, that the station, being on the air all day every day, is likely to take care of itself on major events.

*Speeches and interviews* are probably the most simple and acceptable type of special broadcast you can arrange. Their effectiveness may approach zero if the performer is lacking in importance or personality, or they may rank high on the survey charts if he is a distinguished guest who is telling your story with real conviction. The trick is in selecting and priming the man.

Where an interview is involved, make certain that the questions are planned ahead of time and that there is no lack of, or groping for, right answers.

Aside from its use in broadcasts by dignitaries, the interview technique can be used effectively as a method of news reporting. Put your own representative across the mike from the station announcer for a sympathetic discussion of farm news and features, and listeners are rather certain to get a favorable impression.

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*Forums* in which three or four of your members participate, with either the station announcer or one of your officials as moderator, can be used as the radio equivalent of a newspaper feature article. Through questions and answers or discussion, a forum panel can broadcast not only the facts you want told, but argument and opinion as well.

*General sustaining programs* offer possibilities for a weekly "same time, same station" continuity which you may not want to tackle at the start. Such continuity, however, means an opportunity to build up a regular basic audience of your own, whereas in the case of newscasts or intermittent programs of any kind you are dependent upon audiences built by others.

There is no need, in the case of a continuing weekly program, to stick to the same talent or the same subject each week. Give the program a general name indicating a local farm hour, and you will be amazed at the amount of ideas and talent there is available. One broadcast can be a quiz program on facts about local farming, with business men as contestants. Next week members of the women's auxiliary or the Home Demonstration Club can talk about their hobbies or pet projects. Or the county agent and home demonstration agent might debate whether men or women are more efficient on the farm. There may even be an amateur cowboy band at some rural school in your area. The woods are full of possibilities if you will remember that folks dearly love to hear their neighbors and fellow-townsmen on the air, that the program

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itself should be mostly entertainment, and that you should put your serious message into the time which would normally be used for the "commercials".

These suggestions are not intended as anything more than stimulants to your imagination. Your imagination may tell you, for example, that the answer to an immediate, regular, local farm program is a musical period sponsored by your organization and featuring transcribed music with a farm flavor. The announcer would select the records from the station library, the commercials would carry your own message, and both you and the station might be very happy. A five-minute speaker or a good solid argument for or against something could be substituted for a song or two when necessary.

However you work it, and whatever you set up, remember not to attack other organized groups unless you are prepared for a rebuttal. The same government regulations which require stations to present civic programs also require that, if one side of an argument is presented, time must be made available to the other side on the same terms and in equal amount.

### *Television*

In most areas television is still so young, its stations so few, its costs so high, and its future so undetermined, that it probably will be of little concern to your local public relations program in the immediate future. There is one practice of television stations, however, which will be of interest if one is located nearby, and that is the practice of

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sending cameramen into surrounding areas to make recordings on movie film for telecasting. Something special in the way of an agricultural celebration, a demonstration of new equipment, or other significant event justifies a call to the program director of any television station which reaches into your area.

### SPEAKERS

Although the use of speakers in connection with your public relations program has been referred to a number of times on preceding pages, the advantages of having an adequate number of informed volunteers are such that at least a summary is indicated:

Speakers in the flesh can generate a degree of enthusiasm which normally cannot be matched in type—(few souls have been stirred by printed or broadcast sermons to the emotional intensity of the sawdust trail);

Everybody in the audience must either concentrate on what the speaker is saying—he can't be turned off by flipping a plug or turning a page—or be obviously discourteous;

A speaker can adjust his message and emphasis to conform to the special interests of the particular group addressed;

A speaker can usually do a *quicker* job of selling an idea to a specific group than can be done in any other way;

Speakers make news through announcements of their engagements, reports of

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speeches, and the newspaper and radio interviews they often generate.

It is not necessary, or even desirable, that all of those who tell your story from the platform should be farmers or farm officials. Editors, teachers, bankers, civic leaders, merchants, club women, and even advanced students can sometimes do a better job of selling than can be done by a speaker who is officially identified with agriculture and is therefore expected to plead its cause.

Friendly politicians—particularly members of state or national legislative bodies—can render conspicuous service through speeches or statements made before their colleagues. A prominent politician's statement in praise and support of a campaign you are conducting, or a project or program you are sponsoring, or of the organization itself, can be multiplied many times over through news accounts, speech reprints, and other media.

You may want to line up a "stable" of speakers by individual, personal solicitation. Or you may feel that it is better to invite the best and most articulate platform personalities in your area to come together for an explanation of your problem and a plea for their assistance. Whichever procedure you follow, be sure to remind your prospective cooperators that they can be extremely helpful even when they are not speaking on subjects entirely agricultural. Indeed the preacher can conceivably do a better job with a few paragraphs legitimately and appropriately placed in his Thanksgiving sermon than your best farm speaker could do in an hour before the same audience.



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Once you have a speaker willing, you still have the job of being sure that he is ready, i.e., informed. Probably the most simple way is to place in his hands one or more "stock" speeches as source material—speeches you have made, or that your state or national presidents have made—plus a brief written summary of current figures and facts of local agricultural life and needs.

### FAIRS AND EXHIBITS

No medium of communication with the public offers greater opportunity for misuse and wasted effort than that of exhibits. Particularly in the case of the local fair, the notion is widely held that an exhibit—any exhibit—is a worthwhile public relations activity.

It has been estimated that at least 56 million people in this country attend over 2,000 fairs a year. At virtually every fair, agriculture and allied activities receive greater emphasis than any other phase of community life. Yet if you are not extremely careful it will turn out that your exhibits—whether used at fairs or in other ways—require more time and work and expense than they are worth to your job of seeing that the public at large is "informed, friendly, and ready to fight".

*Local fairs* are actually much better as a method of merchandising than as a means of influencing public attitudes. They are a natural and profitable medium for the farm machinery dealer or manufacturer who can demonstrate actual products, with order blanks and flesh-and-blood salesmen attached;

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but there is considerable doubt that a comparable amount of effort and expense will yield proportionate results in the sale of an "idea".

### *Using the Fair as a Whole*

Your most promising and productive procedure for cashing in on the local fair is to convince officials of the sponsoring organization that the entire theme and program of the fair should be aimed specifically at selling agriculture more solidly to the public. If fair posters, fair publicity, and finally the displays themselves can all reflect such a purpose, you will succeed in centering public attention on the progress and importance of local agriculture during the entire fair period.

A second attractive possibility is the display of cards or placards in all appropriate exhibits throughout the fair buildings. Such placards can be printed or, if a fast sign painter or show-card writer can be borrowed from a local store, they can be done individually to obtain greater variety of message. They should be small enough not to detract from the exhibit in which they are displayed, and large enough to be seen and read easily by visitors—(the 11x14 card used in department store windows is probably your best size). In some cases the fair association may be willing to make the display of such cards a standard regulation for all exhibitors; in others it may be necessary to get individual consent.

Various messages will suggest themselves for use on display cards. One of the best is the did-you-

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know or believe-it-or-not approach, which permits use of one unusual statement on each card of a series, but keeps all under a single heading. "Did You Know: that Jones County farmers created \$5,000,000 of new wealth for Jones County last year?" represents a technique which can be adapted to fit your organizational story or your national story as well as that of the community. Individual crops, achievements, and problems can even be included in the same series of cards.

Third and last, there is the possibility of an exhibit booth of your own. If such an exhibit is undertaken, it will probably prove more profitable to use it as a means of selling the organization to farmers than as a means of selling agriculture to the public. When compared with the two preceding suggestions, it has the disadvantage of being seen only by visitors who pass a specific point. Also it has to be staffed, and the chances are at least even that it may prove unduly troublesome and expensive unless used for direct solicitation of members or some similar organizational purpose.

### *Other Display Media*

*Store windows, bank lobbies, and public buildings* offer display opportunities around the calendar. In larger communities hotel lobbies, public utilities windows, and Chamber of Commerce facilities can be added. The key to inclusion of this type of activity in your program is the availability of an individual or an agency to handle it. A Home Demonstration Club, 4-H Club, or some vocational

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school may accept the entire assignment as a group project. Your women's affiliate might take it over and conduct an agricultural display contest in which school classes would compete for the best decorated window or lobby. "Did-You-Know" cards drawn by students could help simplify the story-telling problem.

*Parades and floats* are troublesome, expensive, and on the whole ineffective as a public relations tool. Your best bet is to avoid them unless unusual circumstances create some special opportunity involving minimum outlay of energy and cash.

### CONTESTS

Americans love contests. More than 38,000 of them have saved, wrapped, and mailed the cooked wishbones of chickens as part of a contest held by a poultry group. As many as 5 million have entered a single contest promoted through the radio, newspaper, and magazine advertisements of a major manufacturer. And in the field of farm organizations the most effective job of statewide political action yet accomplished was in the form of a get-out-the-vote contest.

How you go about cashing in on Americans' love of competition and prize-appeal is a matter of your own good judgment as to what sort of contest activity is likely to be most practical and productive in your area. The best opportunities, however, will probably be found in three directions—schools, women's groups, and members of your own organization.

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*School contests* to be effective should come in the form of assignments from the teacher, with prizes by classes or grades, and with subjects and rules adjusted to fit various levels of training. High school students will be able to give an excellent account of themselves in essay contests on such subjects as "What Farming Means To Me and My Family". They will be able also to handle limericks and jingles and to complete, in a required maximum or minimum number of words, such sentences or thoughts as "Farming is important to me because . . .".

Grammar grade folks who can't handle essays can try to spell the most words out of the letters in "Jones County Farms", or bring in the longest list of products made from local crops and livestock.

Club women have a way of spicing up their programs with little features which their husbands' organizations seldom consider. The ladies are likely to go for contests which can be conducted within the time limitations of a single program. By way of illustration, mimeographed sheets containing a list of "true or false" statements about farming and farm problems can be passed around, the answers entered by each contestant in an allotted time, and the results determined by having each member grade her neighbor's paper as the chairman announces correct answers—all in a matter of a few minutes. The same idea can be carried out in oral form along the lines of a spelling bee. Straight questionnaires can be used instead of the true-or-false technique. Adaptations can be made

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of some of the school contests previously mentioned. The job is to get your story across to these women leaders, and contests offer a chance to do it in such a way that each member participates personally.

*Agricultural groups* offer a long and varied list of contest opportunities which can be made to pay off handsomely. Insofar as your public relations program is concerned, for example, the winning of a county calf or pig contest can be carried much farther than its immediate good influence on other farm youth. It can be used as an important source of publicity in both the news and feature classifications. The quality and quantity of local meat production, progress being made in improving breeds, problems which must be overcome for profitable operation—virtually the entire story of farm needs and farm service in the field of livestock can in some way be included in the publicity accompanying such a contest. The same principle of course applies to contests involving crops.

In an entirely different field, Iowa farmers some years ago won an “impossible” political fight by competing among themselves to see what county could get the highest percentage of rural voters to the polls.

Even in the matter of increased strength and support for your organization, competition between teams can add interest and effectiveness to a drive for new members, or a campaign for increased attendance at meetings.

*Public contests* are of questionable merit when operated on a local basis. They need broad pro-

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motion and substantial prizes. More importantly, there is danger that the public may be disposed to look on the ballyhoo surrounding such a contest as being more suitable for soap operas than for a farm program. Your wooing, in short, may become too obvious.

### COOPERATIVE PROMOTION

Business organizations have been learning some important public relations lessons of their own, and a little checking around may uncover a substantial volume of potential cooperation. Even firms not directly allied with agricultural activity are often willing to tie in with farmers and farm organizations as a part of their own public relations activities.

Banks have probably gone further than any other type of local business enterprise in identifying themselves with civic affairs. In most cases they are consistent advertisers, and many of them devote their space largely to community welfare. They assume leadership in developing hometown projects, supply their officers as speakers, and maintain a relatively liberal level of cash contributions.

The number of potential cooperating firms will vary almost directly in proportion to the size of the community. The following classifications, however, may well be approached in connection with one or more of the activities to be outlined in succeeding paragraphs: banks, public utilities, wholesalers, larger retail stores, feed dealers or mixers, implement dealers, fertilizer distributors, seed companies,

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automobile agencies (trucks), and buyers and processors of agricultural products.

The response you obtain from these and other individual firms will not be determined entirely by the size of their operations and the financial stake they have in agriculture. It will be determined also by the alertness of the particular men who head them, the sensitivity of the firm to public attitudes and opinions, and the suggestions you are able to make as to appropriate ways and means of cooperating on a profitable basis.

### *Newspaper Advertising*

One of the surest ways to get a message across to the public in exactly the form you want it is through advertising space in the local paper. Few farm organizations have funds with which to buy such space. Its sponsorship by a local business firm in your behalf, however, is a type of cooperative effort which assures full credit to the participating firm and at the same time makes a highly valuable contribution to your own work. The willingness of civic-minded firms to go along with this sort of project is illustrated by the success of the National Cotton Council in obtaining 7,654 advertisements in Cotton Belt weeklies in a 12-month period as a result of mail solicitation of banks and other advertisers. One public utility has recently run a series of institutional insertions in behalf of agriculture in all 19 of the daily newspapers in its state.

In making arrangements for sponsored advertising it is important that emphasis be placed on continuity of schedule. The benefits of advertising,



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both for you and for the sponsor, are increased by repetition, and a series of 10 has more than 10 times the effect of a single insertion. The exception of course is the occasion when a full page or other large space may be needed to present an unusually urgent or timely message.

Special sections or editions are often used as a method of generating cooperative advertising from firms which are glad to help occasionally but are unwilling or unable to finance an entire series. More than half of the papers in one agricultural state have been known to publish "Harvest Festival" editions simultaneously, each soliciting and preparing its own advertising, as the result of suggestions and plans made by a state agency which in turn was nudged by a farm leader like you. Another agricultural group arranged with 23 of the largest daily newspapers in its region to sell, prepare, and distribute special issues devoted to its own particular cause.

### *Radio Time*

The occasion can easily arise, especially in connection with political subjects or campaigns, when you will want to say things over the air which cannot properly be classified as civic program material. Under such circumstances you may take the same approach to radio time as has just been described with respect to newspaper space, i. e., the solicitation of sponsors. Particularly will such arrangements be advantageous when a heated campaign is in progress and the frequent use of persuasive speakers is in order.

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Another valuable radio plan consists of arranging for short spots on the program of an advertiser who already has a regular schedule, an established audience, and a choice hour of day or evening. Your announcements on such a program are certain to get substantially greater attention than if used as filler material during slack hours. Your station's program director can give you an accurate appraisal of audiences enjoyed by various advertisers at various times of the day.

### *Imprints and Enclosures*

Every family in your area receives some sort of business mail, and every piece of business mail is a potential opportunity to get across some tiny part of your story. Now and then a firm which is especially cooperative may be willing both to print and to distribute small leaflets or other enclosures with statements or circulars going to its customers. More often, the practical procedure will be to buy or solicit a substantial quantity of envelope-size printed slips, and have them distributed by a number of firms. Some duplication of circulation may result, but it can do no damage; it will tend, on the other hand, to increase impact.

There is another way of using mail which is entirely costless, and which assures constant repetition of a slogan, phrase, or entire sentence. It consists of "imprints" on the envelopes, letterheads, billheads, checks, and other business forms and stationery used by all manner of local firms and sometimes by local government. By preparing

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half a dozen brief messages, and offering changes from time to time, your committeeman working on mail will be able to keep an atmosphere of aliveness about the project which is lost when the same slogan or phrase is used in the same position on the same printed pieces year after year.

An alert printer who is willing to cooperate can be of major help in reminding his customers regarding imprints, and in keeping your current set of messages available for selection.

### *Signs and Billboards*

“Outdoor” signs and display boards are probably the oldest advertising medium in history. They were used at least as far back as ancient Egypt, and they still play an important part in merchandising and selling. Even though you may be unable to obtain the familiar 24-sheet paper posters for use on vacant boards in your area, there may still be opportunities for capitalizing on “outdoor” media.

There is a chance that some cooperative operator may have “painted boards” which are empty and which he will place at your disposal for some minimum period provided you can arrange for painting. Otherwise your best bet is to ask a local club, or local government, to erect outdoor displays as a matter of community advertising and civic pride.

Painted boards or permanent arches on main highways at city and county lines serve as excellent “reminder” devices. A quick figure or two on total agricultural income, some special claim to fame in

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the production of crops or livestock, or some special slogan—these are samples of things which can be read by those who run. Also they cannot be repeated too often to hometown motorists as they drive back and forth past your display.

### SLIDES AND FILMS

The fact that more than 60 million Americans spend two to four hours of every week in theaters is adequate evidence of the appeal and drawing power of movies as a medium of communication. Even if you had the money, you would not be justified in producing any sort of movie for local consumption, but there are a number of inexpensive and productive ways in which you can ride the bandwagon of screen appeal.

In rural communities which have no movie theaters, your organization can sponsor the presentation of films at the school auditorium or other public meeting place. Either the school or the county agent will almost certainly have a projector.

Excellent films on agricultural subjects are available without cost from the U. S. Department of Agriculture and from the Farm Film Foundation, the latter being a non-profit educational organization "dedicated to the creation of better understanding between urban and rural America through audio-visual education". A letter addressed to the Foundation at 1731 I Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C., will bring its catalog. If the USDA list is not immediately available at the office of the county agent, it can be obtained by writing the Film Library at state Extension headquarters.

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In introducing each program, or through utilization of the intermissions between films, you or your appointee will be able to put in some solidicks in behalf of your organization and its program.

### *Commercial Theaters*

In small communities where theaters use still "slides" for commercial announcements, you may be able to arrange for agricultural slides on virtually any schedule and for almost any purpose you wish. A typewritten slide containing the outstanding news or feature statement of the week, for example, could be run daily, with new copy each Monday. News announcements regarding radio shows, agricultural fairs, contests, or public programs could be inserted when needed. Direct appeals could be included to whatever extent the theater manager would permit—appeals to support your organization, buy the products of its members, or champion public issues.

To give continuity and immediate identification, you can have the theater manager order for you a slide border or background made from an actual photo of some selected local farm scene. Inside or over this would be placed the typed "transparency" containing your current message.

### *Picture Stories on Film*

In every community there is the possibility of developing a compelling picture story through the use of color film in any ordinary 35mm. camera. The key here is to find a nearby camera bug or

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hobbyist who will gladly swap his time for the experience, prestige, and civic service involved. No expensive equipment is needed, and the color film, including processing, costs only a few cents per scene. If there is no projector available, one adequate for your needs can be bought from a camera store or ordered through a drug store for a few dollars.

If your volunteer is a beginner, see that he foregoes any effort to be fancy, forgets such gadgets as exposure meters, and simply follows instructions accompanying each roll of film. If he is experienced, he will be able to add to the interest of the presentation by copying charts, typewritten titles, or inked illustrations for inclusion in the photo series.

The advantage of such a picture presentation is several-fold. It capitalizes on the selling and retention value of visualization. It can be used before any audience and in any room or auditorium which is likely to be encountered in the small or medium size town or city. By proper selection of slides to be used on any given occasion, the message can be varied to fit school students, women's clubs, men's groups, or virtually any other audience. The accompanying speaker, not being tied down by the inflexibility of movie film timing, can emphasize or hurry over any part of his story as he wishes.

Subjects which can be included in your picture story include prize-winning products, champion livestock, new crops, new machinery, scenes illustrating new methods or practices, farm youths and

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adults demonstrating unusual activity or achievement, copies of charts and figures—in short, anything or anybody that you would want your audience to see if you could take them on a selling tour of local farm scenes, farm people, and farm facts.

### “WEEKS” AND “DAYS”

Just about everybody has his day or his week—except the farmer. Labor has a day, fathers have a day, mothers have a day, and so do Saint Patrick, Saint Valentine, and the groundhog. There are more special “weeks” each year than the total number of weeks on the calendar.

Most of these propaganda celebrations are planned at the national level, and percolate through various channels down to local committees which may or may not follow them through with enthusiasm. The result is that your community may have a rip-snorting Armistice Day and a quiet Fourth of July, or vice versa, depending on one thing—the interest and influence of the local people behind it.

### *Farmer's Day*

What about a Farmer's Day — a day which acknowledges and emphasizes the absolute physical dependence of the public upon the nation's farms and farm products. And how about starting such an observance as a strictly local matter right in your own community where you and your organization are fully equipped to make it the biggest special day of the year except Christmas.

Don't try to use Thanksgiving for the purpose if you can help it. Thanksgiving may have been

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started by farmers, but it has now become such a day of general thanksgiving by everybody for everything that it would be difficult to recapture its original intent satisfactorily. Even more important, Thanksgiving is so close to Christmas that you could not hope to stimulate all the cooperation which would normally be available.

Perhaps a day at the start of the planting season might be more dramatic anyway. Instead of thankfulness for a bird already in the hand, it would represent hopefulness for two additional ones in the bush. It would have the element of uncertainty as to what the coming season might bring. It would emphasize the toil and risk of farming—and the dependence of the public upon it—to an extent impossible in the celebration of harvests already gathered and in the barn.

A major benefit of such a project is the excuse it gives, and the opportunity it furnishes, for you to call on every public relations medium and tool in the community for a concentration of effort which cannot be achieved without some such special device.

### *Everybody in the Act*

*In the very process of calling for help, you and your committeemen will be engaging in the finest form of public relations—personal selling. You will go to the mayor or other chief politician for a proclamation of Farmer's Day, and in the act of writing it he will give more concentrated thought to your program than at any other time. You will ask the schools to hold special observances at every*



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grade level—you will ask every local club and organization to put on special programs—you will ask the preachers to use a text from the parable of the sower.

Grocery stores can feature fresh, canned, bottled, and cellophaned products made from crops or animals grown on local farms. Department stores can feature cotton and wood and paper as products of field and forest, or they can build special window displays, or offer special bargains to rural customers, or use special newspaper advertisements paying tribute to agriculture.

Certainly you will count on the newspaper for a special section or edition, and the radio station for its airborne equivalent. You may want to stage a public rally featuring some speaker of unusual distinction. There is a place in such a program for every single firm in town, and for every segment of organized community life. Make it work, and it will help smooth the path for all the rest of your public relations program.

## CONCLUSION

This program means work—a lot of it—and work means sacrifice. There is no other way. Sacrifice is what it took to win America's freedom, and sacrifice is what it is going to take to save it.

Regardless of effort, however, it may prove physically impossible to start every part of your program immediately. In such a case, multiply your efforts by enlisting as many assistants as are qualified to serve. Then move ahead with as much activity as you can. A small and active program diligently pursued is of genuine value, and certainly more desirable than large plans with little action.

One of the most insidious temptations to guard your program against is the idea that it is too small to have any appreciable effect on agriculture's welfare. It has been figured that if one-fourth of one per cent of the votes cast in the national election of 1948 could have been changed and carefully redistributed, the entire result would have been reversed. A difference of one stroke can mean a national golf champion or an also-ran. One hit can win a world series. Your county or community may furnish the margin that makes the difference between success and failure for agriculture.

Certainly your local organization has never participated in a fight for bigger stakes than now. Inform and make friends of the public, and the fight is yours.





\$1.50

